

STOURBRIDGE CHRONICLE



Thursday, January 2, 2014

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Fond Farewell

Two charity leaders will be a hard act to follow

See Page 17



What's On

Entertainment and TV listings guide

Starts Page 27



Champion

Welborn wins his second boxing title

Sport – Page 40



Borough park ban on cycles is lifted

A BAN on cycling in Dudley's parks dating back 36 years will be lifted as part of plans to boost fitness and provide safe places for children to ride their bikes.

A council by-law currently prohibits cycling in any of the council's 18 parks and public open spaces in the borough. But bosses say they now want to permit cycling at all of the sites following a successful trial in five parks.

For 12 months cycling was allowed at the five Healthy Hub sites – Mary Stevens Park, Huntingtree Park, Silver Jubilee Park and Netherton Park and the Dell Stadium, Pensnett.

The ban was relaxed and signs denoting a Cyclists Code of Conduct were installed. There had been concerns about the potential risk to pedestrians.

But during the period to April 2012 no incidents relating to cycling were recorded in any of the parks and there have been no problems reported since then despite visitor numbers increasing.

Although under the 1977 by-law people could face prosecution for flouting the rule, the authority says it has never actively prohibited cycling in parks.

Environment boss Councillor Tracy Wood said parks provide better opportunities for young people to learn to cycle in a safe environment.

View deadline now extended

A DEADLINE for families to air their views over controversial changes to children's services in Dudley has been extended by council bosses.

Officials want to make £2.3 million savings but have dropped initial proposals to axe seven children's centres, though a shake-up is still likely.

Dudley Council has announced it is extending its consultation until January 10 to give families the chance to have a say at www.dudley.gov.uk

ZOO CELEBRATES A BUMPER YEAR

Great-gran delivers baby



Emily Stevens was delivered by great-grandmother Alma Parkes, seen with mum Claire, dad John and brother Harry

GREAT-GRANDMOTHER Alma Parkes knows all about childbirth, having had five babies of her own.

And the 82-year-old has an extra special bond with her family's latest addition after turning midwife to bring great-granddaughter Emily into the world – the second relative she has helped to deliver.

Mother-to-be Claire Stevens was at her grandmother Alma's Kinner home when she started giving birth to Emily in the lounge. Great-gran took control. It was not the first time as she helped deliver her granddaughter Kelly 34 years ago.

Alma, who now has three great-grandchildren, said after her latest delivery: "It was a privilege. My family mean the world to me."

Claire and her husband John, from Albion Street in Wall Heath, said they were grateful.

"She was amazing. We don't know what we would have done without her," said Claire, who gave birth two days after her 29th birthday.

Claire was already a week overdue when she was getting ready to visit her grandmother's house.

She felt a slight pain while getting son Harry, aged three, ready at home

but dismissed it as nothing serious by the time Alma arrived to pick her up. That lunchtime the twins returned. She called John and told him he should come back from his work's Christmas lunch.

Minutes later they realised the baby was coming more quickly than they thought. That is when Alma took over while John called 999. "It was happening very quickly," said Alma.

"She gave another push and just as the paramedics came through the door the baby delivered."

Emily was born weighing 9lb 9oz on December 19.

AROUND 250,000 people poured through the doors at Dudley Zoo last year – making 2013 one of the attraction's most successful years to date.

Chief executive Peter Suddock has credited the zoo's continued efforts to develop the site and invest in facilities for the swell in visitor numbers.

And it's set to be a busy time for the venue in 2014 with several new exhibits opening, as well as other improvements.

Mr Suddock said: "The investment and changes have enhanced our visitor experience and, alongside celebrating the successes of the past 12 months, we have some very interesting plans rolling out across the site."

Achievement

"We have grown visitor numbers by an amazing 100,000 in just eight years, which is an incredible achievement in today's economic climate, and this year we reached the quarter of a million mark – that's 250,000 visitors through the gates."

Figures released earlier in the year, showed the zoo welcomed 120,000 people through the gates between January and the end of July this year, compared with 103,000 during the same period last year.

Recent boosts to the animal collection and the creation of bespoke enclosures for some of the world's rarest species, including Gelada Baboons on the Bank, are proving popular.

Mr Suddock said: "Primate numbers are up, as are bird species, and we're very proud of new Sumatran male tiger, Joao, a mate for our beautiful female, Daseep.



Zoo boss Peter Suddock

"She is one of the most important big cats in the world and it is vital her bloodline continues."

Work on the iconic wave entrance and Safari shop is expected to be completed by Easter when the restoration of the bear ravine and kiosk will begin.

The £1.15m project, which also included repairing and reopening the chairlift last year, is funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund.

Further work will see the zoo invest £600,000 on a retail complex, Tecton interpretation centre and the upgrading of the toilets and food outlets.

■ Zoo being restored to former glory – see page 11

Threat to demolish landmark is revived

COUNCIL bosses saying campaigners aiming to save the former Dudley Hippodrome theatre lack any 'sensible' plans for it to be saved.

Plans to demolish the landmark venue are going back before the planning committee. The apparent death knell comes after the old theatre on Castle Hill marked its 75th anniversary.

Regeneration boss Councillor Judy Foster halted campaigners' plans to re-enter the building to gather details on work needed, citing safety concerns. Those fighting to save the building called the refusal a 'deliberate ploy' to bring down their campaign and branded dismissal of their proposals as 'nonsense'.

The group drew up a plan to save the former bingo hall but an independent assessment ordered by the council found the plan 'unviable'.

Councillor Foster said: "The proposal from the friends group was assessed independently and the outcome was clear in terms of it not being a viable option, which is why the council will not be considering the proposal any further. We have always made it clear that sensible proposals for the building would be considered. In the absence of such a proposal the council will continue to explore the option of demolition."

■ Memory Lane – page 8

Hard decisions will be made

COUNCIL bosses have warned tough decisions are needed to save £2.3 million after promising to keep children's centres open.

An outcry from families forced Dudley Council to back down on plans to axe seven children's centres.

But council leader Councillor David Sparks says the savings still need to be met, warning the authority was considering a number of ways to make necessary cuts.

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NEWS

CONTENTS

Peter Rhodes	4
News Feature	6
Letters	7
Memory Lane	8
Calendar	20 - 21
Clubs	22
What's On	27
TV Listings	28 - 30
Motoring	33 - 34
Sport	39 - 40

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Welfare cuts killed my brother – claim

A HEARTBROKEN sister has blamed welfare chiefs for her partially-sighted brother's death after he killed himself amid money worries.

Tim Salter, a former sales manager, was left 'destitute' when he was declared fit to work and had his benefits axed. The 53-year-old was found hanged at his home in Meddins Lane, Kinver, two days before he was due to be evicted over rent arrears.

He had fallen behind on payments after the Government cut his state benefits under its controversial 'fit to work' scheme.

Relatives discovered Mr Salter's dire financial straits after his death, when they found a housing association repossession order in the bin. His grieving sister Linda Cooksey, aged 60, of

Chandler Avenue, Kinver, hit out at welfare chiefs, saying they had pushed Mr Salter 'over the edge'.

Her brother had been registered partially blind since 1994 after a drug overdose left his sight damaged. She believes he would still be alive if he had not been deemed fit to work.

Mrs Cooksey, who found her brother hanging in the hallway, said: "It just sent him over the edge. He must have felt so worthless and that life wasn't worth living. He didn't want to be a burden on anyone. I think he'd just got that depressed and down he was just ignoring everything after being told he was fit for work."

She added: "I totally believe he'd still be alive now if they hadn't stopped his money."

An inquest heard a letter dated September 17 gave Mr Salter 10 days to leave his home. Mr Salter, who suffered from agoraphobia, hanged himself eight days later.

A spokesman for South Staffordshire Housing Association, said: "We work very hard to avoid getting to the stage of seeking possession of any of our properties by calling, visiting and writing to customers who we believe are struggling with their finances to offer them advice and support. Offers were made to Mr Salter on a number of occasions between July and September."

South Staffordshire coroner Andrew Haigh ruled the drop in income contributed to Mr Salter's death. Mr Salter's family have now written to the Prime Minister.

Mistaken identity led to death of young father

HE WAS fleeing for his life in a bid to get away from a hammer-wield- ing attacker when he ran into path of a 38-ton truck and died.

Sartaj Aziz, of Stourbridge, was a victim of mistaken identity after he was wrongly thought to have threatened a teenager with a machete.

New bid to fund play area

A £200,000 plan to transform an area of barren land near a football club ground into a children's play area and community garden has been revealed.

Residents want to form a community group to press for lottery funding to get the scheme in Cradley off the ground.

Original plans to gain £50,000 towards the project from the National Lottery's Peoples Millions scheme were shelved after an unsuccessful application. But now campaigners have drawn up proposals in a bid to secure cash for the location known as 'The Barn Area'.

Officials from Dudley Council have already agreed to consider giving the group a share of money from 'section 106' funds. This is cash paid by developers for improvements in nearby communities.

But campaigners will also make a fresh application to the National Lottery for cash to transform the land off Beeches View Avenue, near to Cradley Town football club. Ward Councillor Ken Turner says the scheme would also be supplemented with cash from the People Millions scheme.

He was chased to his death by Garret Fitzpatrick, who was jailed for five years for the manslaughter of the 26-year-old father of two.

Wolverhampton Crown Court was told Fitzpatrick arrived at Formula 1 Hand Car Wash in Thorns Road, Quarry Bank, on August 20 after being told Mr Aziz, a regular at the business, had attacked a teenager.

Rage

Miss Joanne Barker, prosecuting, said the threats had been made by a man named Nigel and that Fitzpatrick had been misinformed.

She said Mr Aziz, of Prescott Road, Stourbridge, often went to the car wash as his friend lived next door. An argument had taken place between Mr Aziz and the unnamed teenager but that he had not brandished a weapon, she said.

Fitzpatrick, aged 27, was told Mr Aziz had produced the knife and went to find him in a rage although carried his partner and four children in his pick-up truck.

"The defendant drove to the car wash in his Ford Ranger," said Miss Barker.

"He saw Mr Aziz, who was sat in the back of his friend's Peugeot, and shouted at him to 'get out of the car'."

"He ran up and was saying he was going to kill Mr Aziz. He was carrying a hammer."

"Mr Aziz was so frightened he got out of the passenger side door and fled."

Miss Barker said witnesses described Mr Aziz as

Report by
Adam Thompson

looking 'terrorised' and that he was running 'hell for leather' to escape Fitzpatrick, who was holding the weapon above his head.

"He ran towards Thorns Road," said Miss Barker. "He emerged from the wrong side of conifers that would block the view of any traffic."

"Mr Aziz wasn't able to see a 38-ton lorry and in his panic he ran into its path and was killed."

She added that Fitzpatrick had also been very close to being hit by the lorry but had stopped in time.

After seeing Mr Aziz hit by the lorry, the attacker returned to his vehicle and drove away. He later hid the hammer and disposed of his clothes but two days later was arrested.

Miss Sarah Buckingham, defending, said Fitzpatrick, of Brierley Hill, had been 'wracked with guilt'.

"He has written a letter to the family expressing his remorse and feelings of guilt," she said. "Mr Fitzpatrick is not bad a person. He is industrious and hard-working and wanted to provide for his family."

Fitzpatrick, of Bank Street, pleaded guilty in November to manslaughter.

Judge John Warner said as he sentenced Fitzpatrick on December 18: "The charge was manslaughter and there was no intention to kill. But it remains the fact a life was lost as a result of your actions."

Detective Inspector Warren Hines of West Mid-



Forensics experts at the scene of the tragedy in Thorns Road



Hit by lorry – Sartaj Aziz



Jailed – Garret Fitzpatrick

lands Police, speaking after the hearing, said: "This was a terrible incident which had catastrophic consequences for the victim Sartaj Aziz and those unfortunate enough to witness events as they unfolded. I hope that the early guilty plea entered by Fitzpatrick and today's sen-

tence will provide some small comfort to Sartaj's family and they are able to begin the slow process of moving on.

"That a young man with everything that life holds ahead of him has been killed as a result of a disagreement is truly tragic."

College gets 95 in work at store

A COLLEGE'S Skills Shop stepped in to recruit almost 100 staff, taking them off the dole to work at a home, leisure and garden superstore's major new branch.

Birmingham Metropolitan College, which this year merged with Stourbridge College, helped to identify unemployed people who could work at The Range at the Merry Hill Centre, which opened in September.

Candidates

The college's Black Country Skills Shop, based at Merry Hill, worked with Jobcentre Plus to sift through 300 candidates that were referred.

Experts from the Skills Shop then interviewed them and steered them through training courses.

The opening of The Range created a total of 150 new jobs, with the Skills Shop filling almost two thirds.

Emma Davies, the store's office manager, said: "The Black Country Skills Shop, along with Jobcentre Plus, really pulled out all the stops in our recruitment drive and, to date, we've taken on 95 members of staff."

Council lose £15m worth of grant aid

DUDLEY Council will be stripped of almost £15 million in government grants.

Bosses are set to receive £136.9m in 2014/15, down from £151.7m for this financial year – a reduction of £14.8m.

The figures confirm warnings made to council leaders about reduced funding. The council is currently carrying out consultation as it looks to make £57.8m of savings by 2017.

Council leader David Sparks said they would be the "biggest cutbacks in our history." But he added: "It's frequently the case that pre-Christmas figures are altered in the light of detailed negotiations."

Sandwell Councillor Steve Eling said he believed the confirmed figures would leave his authority £200,000 worse off than predicted.

"It's not going to make or break the budget," he said. "But we have very little room for manoeuvre."

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Folk rally to the aid of family hit by fire

WHEN a devastating fire started by a dishwasher tore through their Wall Heath home, the Wood family lost almost everything.

Most of their belongings were destroyed by flames or ruined by smoke and they were forced to move into a hotel.

The blaze gutted their semi-detached house and now there will be months of re-plastering, decorating and re-plumbing before they can go back home.

But despite the family of six's ordeal, they have been bowled over by the generosity of both friends and people they had never met.

They have received donations of clothes, toys and other items to help them get back on their feet.

In the run up to Christmas a special grotto was set up in their honour to raise much-needed cash. Bathroom firm Changing Rooms in Upper Gornal was given a festive makeover and youngsters were able to visit Santa.

More than £250 has so far been raised for the family and mother-of-four Jo Wood, 41, who is married to Mike, 45, said she was 'very grateful'.

"Everybody has been brilliant. It's been fantastic how generous people have been."

Son has quit Tory group

THE son of two councillors, who quit the Conservative Party last month amid accusations of bullying, has also resigned from the group.

Former cabinet member and councillor Adrian Turner blamed bad blood within the Dudley Conservative Party, which recently saw his parents Councillors Ken and Hazel Turner leave, as part of the reason for his departure.

Mr Turner joined the Conservative Party in 1997 and represented Lye and Wollescote from 2004 until 2012. He said he had been forced to leave the party as issues were affecting his 'health and happiness'.

He added: "Due to recent events and the continued victimisation that has been experienced by myself and family, I have no alternative than to resign. I became a member of the party believing it was a party of opportunity for all. I have since realised that it is merely an illusion."

Hollywood bringing author's book to life



Author Steve Watson

IT HAS been four years since Steve Watson wrote the novel that changed his life and now the release of the Hollywood film adaptation is approaching. The Stourbridge-born author has sold more than 350,000 copies of Before I go to Sleep in 32 countries.

The finishing touches are being put to the film starring Hollywood A-listers Nicole Kidman and Colin Firth ready for release in the summer. Kidman will play Christine Lucas, who wakes up to find she does not recognise her life, while Firth will play her husband Ben.

Mr Watson a former pupil at The Wordsley School and King Edward VI Sixth Form College in Stourbridge, is was looking forward to seeing

the film released. He said: "It's so exciting. It was amazing to see Nicole Kidman acting out scenes that I had written."

Mr Watson spent a number of days on set in London and said watching filming was like 'seeing my imagination brought to life'.

Mr Watson said: "I went to see filming a few times - it was great, and a very moving experience, but quite surreal. Although the interiors and the settings aren't exactly as I imagined them, the spirit of the book is there."

The rights were snapped up by producer Ridley Scott, who has drafted in Hollywood stars Kidman and Firth to play the lead roles. It is being scripted and directed by Rowan Joffé.

Mr Watson, 41, said Kidman had 'really got inside the character'. He added: "Seeing the two stars expressing the emotions took me back to writing those scenes." Kidman told him Christine was a 'great character', which made him realise how much his life has changed since he wrote the book while working as an audiology specialist in London. He is now working on his follow-up.

He said: "I wrote my first book in a bit of a bubble, thinking that if I was lucky maybe an agent might read it. Now the bar has been raised. It's hard not to start trying to second guess what readers want, but that way madness lies. I'm working hard not to fall into that trap," he added.

Rubbish mountain lands businessman behind bars

IT HAS been a battle that has rumbled on for four years. But now a businessman who failed to clear a towering pile of rubbish has spent Christmas behind bars and will be pursued for assets to pay for the clearance costs.

Robert McNaughton will have his accounts and property examined as the Environment Agency looks to seize any of his remaining assets to contribute to the £750,000 maximum bill for clearing the huge amount of waste from the Refuse Derived Fuel Ltd in Moor Street in Brierley Hill.

by Alex Ross

Sentence

After receiving a six-month sentence for contempt from Mr Justice MacDuff at Birmingham High Court, McNaughton told the judge: "I have no assets, I have spent every penny."

But the agency has outlined it that it will apply to seize McNaughton's assets.

David Hudson, the agency's environment manager, said: "This is not finished from our point of view - we want the site cleared."

"The public should not pay for this mess which has been created by McNaughton and his company - they should pay for it."

"The law requires them to manage within their permit conditions and they have not done that and it would be a bad precedent to set if we began clearing up other people's," sites at public expense."

He said: "It's hard to have sympathy with someone that has been given so many opportunities to do the right thing."

"Our files show numerous occasions where we have offered him a constructive

way forward to bring about reduction in waste in reasonable time scales and he has never taken steps to comply with that."

He added: "We have been very grateful of the support from local residents for the action we have taken and we have spent a lot of time speaking to residents and writing to explain what is happening."

"We do understand they will be frustrated and would like this to be solved quickly. I cannot offer that at the moment because the process is still ongoing."

McNaughton had taken over the site in 2009 from its previous operators but soon residents began complaining about the site.

Environment Agency officials started to take enforcement action over the plant over concerns the waste pile was over permitted limits.

But it was not until 2012 that the organisation brought High Court action against the firm.

The High Court ordered all waste to be cleared by March this year, but that was a deadline that was missed.

One last chance was given as McNaughton was found in contempt of court for breaching the High Court orders in June. But this month he admitted defeat, claiming: "I have tried my utmost."



The massive mound of rubbish at the site in Moor Street, Brierley Hill, which towers above the buildings nearby



Jailed for contempt of court - Robert McNaughton



View of the rubbish towering over the homes at Brierley Hill

NEWS in brief

Fairtrade status at primary school

A PRIMARY school is celebrating the culmination of two years of hard work following the recent achievement of Fairtrade School status.

Staff, pupils and governors from Oldswinford Primary School have been presented with a certificate. The school had to complete five goals which show a commitment to Fairtrade, including setting up a steering group, adopting a policy and committing to using products in canteen classes and uniform options.

It's not too late to get the flu jab

RESIDENTS eligible for a free NHS flu jab are being reminded that it is not too late to be vaccinated.

The winter flu jab is offered to people in 'at risk' groups. These include everyone aged 65 and over, children and adults under 65 with certain medical conditions and all pregnant women.

This year a free nasal spray vaccine is being offered to parents of healthy two and three year olds, so that their children can be protected against the virus.

Store £750 boost for street pastors

A STREET pastor scheme has been awarded £750 by supermarket bosses.

It is one of several groups to receive donations from the Tesco Extra store which opened in Stourbridge in October.

Store manager Sadie Griffiths welcomed volunteers from the Street Pastor team to the store to receive the cheque.

Exercise session for those over 50

AGE UK Dudley will be running an extra exercise session as part of its Leap Over 50 programme.

Tutor Deb Jones will be running a second class from Monday, January 6. It will take place between 1pm and 2pm at Ambleside Christian Centre in Brettell Lane.

For more information contact Deb Jones on 01384 288350.

Meet over a pint

STOURBRIDGE business people will get together for a 'pint after work' meeting on Tuesday. The networking event will be held at Graham's Place in Bridgnorth Road, Wollaston. Email Emma Rose at emmarose@talbotlaw.co.uk

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NEWS

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RHODES

HERE'S a nasty new twist on the 'update your email account' scam designed by internet crooks to extract your personal details. This time the message is: "Your Five incoming mails were placed on hold status due to the recent upgrade to our database. In order to receive the messages, click here to update your account." The threat is that they have your emails. They don't. And if you hover your cursor over the alleged sender's name, in this case "BT Customer Care," it should reveal the true (and probably hijacked) email address of the sender. You can pass this information on to BT but I'm not sure they're interested.

□□□□□□□□

ONE of the most enduring feminist myths is that if women were in charge, this world would be a much nicer place. Women (it is alleged) are gentler, kinder and more co-operative than the wicked old male of the species. This theory does not explain the terrible mess that the lady-led Girgiding UK has made of the vexed issue of recruits swearing their promise to God. The Scouts, led by that ultimate alpha-male Bear Grylls as Chief Scout, faced the same dilemma. They consulted widely and then opted for an alternative Goddess promise to suit atheists and agnostics. It's a free choice – problem solved. Girgiding UK, in contrast, has imposed a headline no-God promise on all newcomers which has caused great division and distress. Dissenting groups are now being threatened with expulsion from the movement. So in a movement designed exclusively for girls, whatever happened to the kindly female qualities? Maybe they should put a man in charge.

□□□□□□□□

THAT HS2 timeline in full. 2009: Government proposes the new line. 2010: First HS2 report paper published. December 2013: MPs of the Commons Transport Committee declare that HS2 is "essential" for the UK's future. So something we had never heard of four years ago is suddenly essential. How stupid do they think we are?

□□□□□□□□

WHAT'S red, has 13 buttons and drives you bonkers? It is the DAB digital radio I bought in a daringly progressive moment a few years ago and which lies, unused, on a windowsill. I haven't a clue how to make it go. This week, thank heavens, the Government announced a stay of execution for FM frequencies. Ed Vaizey, the communications minister, says: "I absolutely believe that the future of radio in this country is digital." And that's where it should remain. Firmly in the future.

□□□□□□□□

SO FAREWELL, Ronnie Biggs. We should never celebrate criminals or their crimes, but you had to admire Biggs's cheek. In one interview, repeated last week, Biggs claimed that the chief purpose of prison is to rehabilitate offenders and, as he had rehabilitated himself, it was not necessary for him to serve his term. Did anybody not smile?

□□□□□□□□

LOOKING back, the Great Train Robbers' haul of £2.6 million seems puny. Inflation has soared and at today's values it would be worth about £46 million. But something else has changed. Back in 1963 this robbery horrified the nation because it was a calculated assault on national icons we cherished and respected: the Treasury, the Post Office, the night-mail train and, above all, our fine banking industry. If someone stole £46 million from the banks today, would we be horrified? Or would we reflect on what a tiny sum this was, compared to the billions lost through greed and fraud when the banking system imploded? Respectable men in smart suits cost us far, far more than Biggs and his gang.

□□□□□□□□

AFTER much study, researchers at the University of California have concluded that men who marry attractive women are happier than those who do not. Good to see the Department of the Bleedin' Obvious is as busy as ever.

□□□□□□□□

AS the row over sexually segregated audiences at British universities rumbles on, Aston University declares that it would tolerate such an arrangement at religious discussions so long as it was voluntary. And what if an audience voluntarily decided they'd like to smoke?

Don't miss Peter Rhodes every Monday to Friday in your Express & Star

New £5.7m building to house the homeless

WORK has begun to demolish a former centre for the homeless in Lye to make way for a new £5.7 million 58-room building to house the homeless.

Gibbs Road House on Gibbs Road, will be demolished to make way for a new two-storey building. It will provide supported accommodation for homeless people. The scheme, being developed by Midland Heart in partnership with Dudley Council, the Homes and Communities

Agency and Bullock Construction, is expected to open in early 2015.

Deputy director of development at Midland Heart Nick Byrne said: "We are completely transforming the site by replacing a one-storey building with a new two-storey development with additional communal areas to help improve our customers' life skills."

"Whilst direct access accommodation will continue to be available for those who need it, the plans for the

new scheme focus around additional services providing support and training opportunities."

Gibbs Road House first opened in the 1960s and worked with vulnerable people from Dudley. The scheme will continue to provide support for people referred by Dudley Council's Homeless Services.

The development will comprise of 58 one-bed apartments – 24 of these will be clustered around communal dining and lounge spaces and 34 will

be self-contained. Amenities include a kitchen, doctors' surgery, gym, allotment and basketball court.

Funded by Midland Heart, Dudley Council and the Homes and Communities Agency, people from the borough will be helped by the service. Councillor Steve Waltho, cabinet member for housing and community safety, said: "We are one step closer to delivering a pioneering new service to help the borough's most vulnerable residents."

Nature reserve horses face being impounded

HORSES grazing on nature reserves in Dudley borough face being impounded after a warning was sent out from council bosses.

Dudley Council has already spent almost £150,000 rounding up horses over the past two financial years.

Now a council-appointed land enforcement firm called Rossendales has put up new signs threatening to impound horses which were stray or tethered to posts on Buckpool Nature Reserve in Brockmoor.

Hamidah Huse, aged 65, of Leys Road, said since the signage had been put up she had alerted the owners of two horses, who had removed their animals.

Foil

But, before Christmas, eight still remained, including a family of two horses and a nine-month-old foal. All the animals are untethered and are roaming freely in the nature reserve.

The retired artist said: "I think the family have been in the reserve for such a long time they should be left alone – they are used to living in the wild and can cope with it."

She added: "But I understand why the other horses should be taken away, they have been left abandoned overnight and require help."

Dudley Council has long faced a battle dealing with horses grazing on the council-owned reserves, including Fens Pool.

by Heather Large

It spent £75,484 on rounding up horses in 2011-12, and then £72,620 in 2012-13.

Officers also regularly receive calls from members of the public concerned about the welfare of the animals.

Councillor Tracy Wood, cabinet member for environment and culture, said: "Land such as Fens Pool and Buckpool are not designated by the council as grazing land for horses so irresponsible horse owners who allow their animals to roam free are doing so illegally."

"We have a long-standing, tried and tested arrangement with a private enforcement agency which posts warning notices stating that stray and illegally grazing horses may be impounded in targeted actions at appropriate times."

She added that the council also worked closely with the RSPCA and had carried out a horse passporting exercise with the charity at Fens Pool earlier this year.

More are in work

NEW official figures show jobless queues are shrinking in Dudley and across the country today.

Across the West Midlands the figure plunged by 26,000 to 240,000 – one of the sharpest falls in recent times, said the Office for National Statistics.

In Dudley borough the claimant count fell by 508 to 8,188, 4.2 per cent of the working population. For Wyre Forest there was a fall of 142 to 1,781 (three per cent).

Nationwide the number of people claiming Jobseeker's Allowance last month fell by 36,700 to 1.27 million. The numbers differ because not everyone classed as unemployed is eligible to claim the allowance.

Fairy tale wedding for couple



Happy ever after for Amanda Billington and Nathan Gibbs, alias Shrek and Fiona

IT WAS a fairytale wedding inspired by animated movie Shrek but instead of a swamp for their nuptials, a couple the green-skinned couple picked Dudley's Priory Hall.

Kingswinford couple, 39-year-old Nathan Gibbs, and 44-year-old Amanda Billington, tied the knot on Saturday dressed up as ogre Shrek and his Princess Fiona, in a special ceremony at the Grade I-listed registration office, all in aid of charity, in which guests also donated fancy dress.

The couple raised money for Cancer Research UK by asking guests to donate to the charity rather than give presents. They think the fundraising may top £1,800.

Former bricklayer Nathan, who runs ironing business The Iron Maidens with Amanda, said they chose to support Cancer Research UK because seven customers had been hit by the disease.

Nathan added: "After we made this decision my sister was diagnosed with breast cancer, which made our choice even more poignant."

Dogs sniff out major illegal haul of tobacco

A HAUL of thousands of illegal cigarettes and more than 2kg of illicit tobacco have been seized from shops and homes across Dudley.

Trading standards officers also uncovered counterfeit or illegal alcohol and DVDs during two days of raids in Dudley, Brierley Hill, Kingswinford and Stourbridge.

The team, with three sniffer dogs, visited 11 premises that were suspected of selling or hoarding unlawful tobacco.

Hidden

The haul included counterfeit and non-duty paid tobacco products, which cannot be legally sold in the UK.

More than 6,100 illegal cigarettes were among items seized on December 18 and 19.

The dogs sniffed out packets that may have been impossible to find without their sense of smell, thousands of times more sensitive than human's.

One of the dogs found a stash of tobacco hidden in the base compartment of a kitchen cupboard. Ozzie, a three-year old sniffer dog used by Dudley Council's Trading Standards team, has helped to find the haul.

College loses out on merger

BOSSES at Birmingham Metropolitan College have spoken of their disappointment after their bid to merge with Kidderminster College was rejected.

Bmet, which already runs sites in Kidderminster as well as campuses in Stourbridge and Brierley Hill, featured in the first round of talks with the college.

Kidderminster College has since announced it is planning to join NCG, one of the country's largest education and training groups. A formal consultation will be launched in the new year.

College officials say the move will lead to more investment and enable it to expand its services for students and wider community.

But bosses at Birmingham Metropolitan College said they believed they had a lot to offer.

The college already runs the £10 million Kidderminster Academy, which opened in the Piano Building, Weavers Wharf, in September 2012. It also runs a football academy with Kidderminster Harriers.



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Courts to be backed by group in Parliament

AN MP is helping to set up a new parliamentary group to support the work of magistrates.

Dudley North Ian Austin said the group would also raise awareness of the role they play in communities.

It comes after he presented a petition of 2,000 signatures to Parliament against plans to close Dudley's criminal courts.

Split

The proposal was part of a shake-up of the court service which would see criminal cases cease in the town.

Under the plans, the magistrates court in Wolverhampton would deal with all trials and youth cases in the Black Country and Walsall and Sandwell would split the rest of the workload between them. Dudley would become a civil, family and tribunal centre.

Mr Austin is now calling on MPs of all parties to join the group.

He said: "I've met with many local magistrates to hear about the work they do. It's thanks to them that people in Dudley can see justice being done in their local community, rather than elsewhere."

Cremation idea helps charities

CHARITIES supported by the Mayor of Dudley are to receive thousands of pounds thanks to a recycling initiative at a crematorium.

Dudley Council has raised £3,400 through the Crematorium Metals Recycling Scheme which recovers metals following cremation on a not-for-profit basis.

With relatives' permission the authority provides the metals to be recycled is able to raise money for charities. Half of the cash raised will go to the White House cancer charity, in Dudley, and Hearing Dogs for Deaf People, both supported by Dudley Mayor Councillor Alan Finch. The other half will be donated to The Teenage Cancer Trust.

Environment boss Councillor Tracy Wood said: "Over the last three years, Dudley has subscribed to the not-for-profit recycling scheme. Recycling metals resulting from cremation is only carried out with the written consent of each bereaved family.

Rat in the bar claim results in £30k bill for hotel

A HOTEL has been hit with a £30,000 bill following an inspection triggered by a complaint from a visitor who claimed they spotted a rat in the bar.

The Talbot Hotel, in High Street, Stourbridge, was closed for around a week before environment officers from Dudley Council said they were satisfied that food safety issues had been addressed. They carried out the inspection in October last year after a customer claimed to have spotted the rodent in the bar area.

The hotel pleaded guilty to 10 offences under food hygiene regulations. Dudley Magistrates' Court was told officers discovered inadequate controls for tackling pests and poor systems in place to protect food from contamination. They also found the hotel was failing to keep equipment clean, as well as walls and work surfaces. Hand washing materials were not maintained.

The firm was fined £27,500 and ordered to pay court costs of £2,461, plus a £120 victim surcharge.

Hotel director Linda Silva was at the court hearing. Afterwards, she said the hotel had 'done everything in its powers' to correct the mistakes made.

"As a company we do take health and safety matters seriously," she said. "This incident was over a year ago and all we can do is apologise for what happened. We have taken great measures with the structure of the building and with regard to health and safety at the hotel. One of the measures we have taken is we have employed an external health and safety company to help us ensure it does not happen again. We have done everything in our powers."

In September 2011, the council's team had also found hygiene issues which needed to be addressed by staff.

Councillor Stuart Turner, council member for health,

said: "We work hard to protect people when visiting food establishments and prosecute businesses who break the law. I hope this court case sends out a clear message that we will work with firms to remind them of their obligation to maintain hygiene standards but ultimately take action through the courts to protect the public."

The firm admitted failing to keep food premises clean and maintained; failing to ensure hand basins in the kitchen were provided with materials for cleaning hands and hygienic drying; failing to ensure the design and layout in rooms where food is prepared permitted good food hygiene practices. It also pleaded guilty to failing to ensure all equipment was effectively cleaned; failing to ensure raw materials and ingredients were kept in appropriate conditions; failing to maintain a permanent procedure to ensure food safety and failing to ensure adequate procedures were in place to control pests.

Views sought on cuts to adult social care services

A CONSULTATION has been launched on the future of adult social care services by cash-strapped Dudley Council as it battles to trim millions of pounds from its budgets.

The council is asking residents for their views on what services it should be prioritising over the next three years.

It comes as bosses try to make savings of almost £60m by 2017, following reductions in government funding.

It's not yet known how much will be cut from the adult social care budget but residents are being invited to have their say on what services are important to them.

Early

Adult social services support people including those with an illness or disability, the elderly and carers.

A series of consultation events have been announced by the council.

Cabinet member for adult and community services, Councillor Dave Branwood, said: "At this stage it is too early to identify the budget for adult social care in 2014/15. Details will be announced in early 2014 as part of the council's overall budget-setting process."

Scheme members could save £177 on energy bills

RESIDENTS who signed up to a scheme aimed at cutting bills could save an average of up to £177 following a recent auction with energy companies. More than 1,600 households signed up to Dudley Council's big switch campaign.

It is part of a national initiative where councils take part in energy auctions to see which energy company can offer the best tariffs for residents. There were three winners in the most recent auction to supply a range of contracts - Scottish Power, Green Star Energy (formerly Pioneer Energy) and British Gas.

by Heather Large

"Government funding for adult social care continues to reduce whilst the number of vulnerable people in our community is rising rapidly. Faced with these pressures it is essential we listen to the views of local people to find out which services they value most."

The first event was held in Brierley Hill before Christmas and the next will be on Tuesday, January 7, at Insight, South Street, Brierley Hill from 4.30pm to 7pm. There will be further events on January 9 at Hale-sowen Cricket Club from 10am to 12.30pm and at Christ Church and Stambermill, Lye, from 2.30pm to 5pm. Sessions will also be held on January 17 at Sedgley Community Centre from 10am to 12.30pm and at Queens Cross Network, Wellington Road, Dudley from 2.30pm to 5pm.

People are asked to confirm if they wish to attend one of the events by calling 01384 815130.

Jodie muscles in at Merry Hill



Jodie Marsh arm wrestles with Zach 'King' Khan, watched by, from left, Victoria Nicholas, Natalie Kowolik, and Kerry Jacobs

GLAMOUR girl Jodie Marsh is forging a career as a bodybuilder and has brought out her own fitness supplement range.

She was joined by bodybuilding champion Zack 'King' Khan, when she met fans at health and nutrition store GNC at Merry Hill.

She spoke passionately about her

new range, which includes a wide variety of fitness supplements covering weight loss, skin care, detox and pre-workout products.

Marsh, who won gold in the INBF Bodybuilding Championships in Los Angeles, said: "It's very exciting to be visiting stores and seeing my products on the shelves for the first time."

Marsh, aged 34, who first appeared in 2002's Essex Wives before a stint in Celebrity Big Brother, began bodybuilding in 2009.

"Before I started bodybuilding I was the most unhealthy person but now I am very fit and healthy. Protein drinks have been very important - I swear by them," she added.

NEWS

in brief

Safer crossing bid at college campus

PLANS to create a crossing for students at a new £18 million vocational campus cross a busy road have been lodged with Dudley Council.

Bosses at Dudley College are concerned the lives of students visiting the Dudley Evolve campus could be in danger when they cross The Broadway.

A planning application for the work would see a puffin crossing installed.

The college has 1,500 students and the number crossing the road, near the Tower Street junction, has increased dramatically. A survey, carried out by an external consultant, suggested some form of crossing was required.

Borough youth vote five praised

FIVE young people have been praised for their work in encouraging others to vote in recent youth ballots.

They represent both the Dudley Youth Council and UK Youth Parliament.

The Make Your Mark ballot was a national consultation organised by the UK Youth Parliament (UKYP) to decide the top issue that UKYP will campaign on next year.

Connor Hill, Joanna Samuels, Kyle Simms and, although not attending the meeting, Jules Singh and Zikria Nawaz were all rewarded for their efforts.

More affordable homes on the way

HOUSES and bungalows are being built on vacant and former council garage sites in Dudley as part of scheme aimed at providing affordable homes.

Black Country Housing Group has begun work on 17 properties in Hartland Avenue, Martin Close and White Poppars, while three properties have already been completed in Westfield Road.

The rundown sites will be transformed to provide a range of two to four bedroom houses and bungalows for affordable rent or shared ownership.

Boost is given to area's foodbank

THE Quinton and Oldbury Foodbank received a donation of two tons of food from Tesco customers in Quinton during the run-up to the festive season.

Food vouchers can be obtained from social services, some GP practices, housing offices and neighbourhood offices.

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NEWS FEATURE

IN MY VIEW

WITH
MARK
ANDREWS

SOARING levels of personal debt. Crippling rates of indirect taxation. The fact that children in Vietnam stand a better chance of getting a decent grounding in the three Rs than they do in Britain.

All important issues, you would no doubt agree. But it's good to see that MP Mary Creagh has spotted another major injustice which should be tackled as a matter of urgency.

Thomas the Tank Engine. Miss Creagh says the lack of female train drivers in Britain is a 'national scandal' and that children's television shows and 'negative stereotypes' were partly to blame.

"In the Thomas the Tank Engine books there are almost no female engines," she says. "The only female characters are an annoyance and a nuisance and in some cases a danger to the functioning of the railway."

Lighten up, love, it's a children's book. Of course, there is no reason at all why women should not become train drivers. They don't require too many map-reading skills, and the reverse parking shouldn't be a problem. That was a joke, by the way.

But seriously, if young girls want to become engine drivers, are they really going to be deterred because it was Edward, not Edwina, who got a new coat of paint?

Given that Miss Creagh seems to have spent quite a bit of time studying the works of Rev Wilbert Awdry, she would no doubt be aware that little is known about the gender of the actual engine drivers. We know Edward's driver, Charlie Sands, is a man, but who is not to say that the company operated a strict equal opportunities policy, with exactly 50 per cent of the drivers being female?

And a committed feminist like Miss Creagh will surely agree with the way the male engines were portrayed as having inherent character flaws. For example, macho Big Gordon was clearly an egomaniac who got his comeuppance when he blew a gasket.

And then there was hypochondriac Henry who was afraid of a few drops of rain.

"It went into a tunnel. And squeaked through its funnel. And never came out again."

Clearly a case of man flu. But he would have fitted in well on today's railways.

JUST a thought about these Boxing Day sales.

On almost every weekday of the year, thousands of the big stores do not open until 9 or even 10 in the morning, when the majority of people are at work.

Then, they shut up shop at 5.30pm, so nobody can do their shopping after work, either.

Then, on one of the few days of the year when most of the population is off work and free to call in at any time, they decide to open up at 6am. Great planning.



Jack, centre, seen with the Friends of the Staffordshire Regiment, at Whittington Barracks



The bullet that was left in Jack, but not discovered until an X-ray years later



Proud family – from left, nephew Kevin Edwards, grandson Ben Willetts, daughter Julie Willetts and son-in-law Sid Willetts

Bullet memento of our Jack the wartime hero

TO MOST people it may seem like an ordinary bullet – a relic of a long lost battlefield.

But to the family of one Second World War paratrooper, Jack Mansell, it is a reminder of their relative's past in one of the bloodiest episodes of the conflict.

The scrap of metal was found in the ashes of the veteran, from West Bromwich, who died in hospital aged 90.

His friends, family and members of the Armed Forces paid tribute to the Black Country Soldier who was one of 35,000 allied soldiers dropped behind enemy lines in the Netherlands during Operation Market Garden in 1944.

The operation, which was intended to force an entry in Germany over the Lower Rhine, had been seen as a way of finishing the war by Christmas but was a devastating defeat for the Allies after they encountered a far stronger resistance than they had expected. Between 15,130 and 17,200 Allies were killed, wounded or captured.

Operation

At the time Private Mansell was only 21 and was fighting with the elite airborne unit of the Second Battalion of the South Staffordshire Regiment, which he had signed up to because they were based close to home.

Pte Mansell was part of an anti-tank unit manning a six-pound gun and on the day of the operation his team landed by Horsa glider in a meadow about six miles from the vital road bridge at Arnhem.

After fighting waves of German tanks for several days, their guns ran out of ammunition and he and his fellow comrades were forced to pull back. But during their withdrawal Pte Mansell was shot by a German sniper in the right hip and taken to a field hospital.

The bullet that the Pte thought had passed through him remained lodged in his body for 69 years. It was only discovered during an x-ray of his abdomen during the 1980s.

His nephew Kevin Edwards said: "During the 1980s Jack injured his



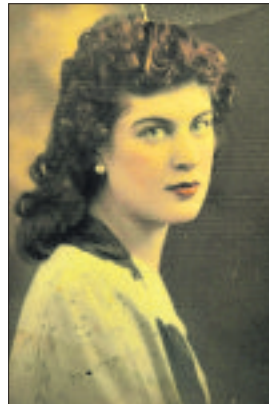
abdomen while moving some metal at work. A routine hospital x-ray showed a bullet located in his right hip. All those years ago, Jack had thought the German bullet had passed through him – in fact it was still lodged in his body. It was left there as it gave him no trouble."

Pte Mansell was cremated at West Bromwich Crematorium, on November 22, and to the surprise of the staff they managed to find the German bullet among his ashes.

Mr Edwards added: "It had melted a little, but was easily recognisable."

A couple of days after arriving at the field hospital, as the Germans arrived and took over, Pte Mansell and five friends slipped out.

The escape attempt proved to be in vain and Pte Mansell was captured quickly and sent to work in German mines and on the railways. Then in the spring of 1945, while on a forced march, a tank with a white star on its side



appeared on a hill and an RAF Typhoon fighter-bomber flew low over – he knew he was finally free.

A couple of weeks later Pte Mansell was back at home – a comfort to his parents whose other son, Tom, had been killed in action by a landmine in the final weeks of the war. He had been serving with the Fifth Battalion The Duke of Cornwall's Light Infantry.

After the war, Pte Mansell returned to Germany, where he worked as a dispatch rider and spent hours of his free time riding around the war cemeteries on his motorbike, trying to find Tom's resting place.

After years of research on the internet Tom's grave was located on the War Graves Commission website, and in September 1999 Pte Mansell finally visited his brother's grave for the first time. Mr Edwards said: "Jack was a very proud man. He never considered himself to be a hero, although he was."

The 53-year-old from Pinewood



Jack and his beloved dog Buffy

Close, Walsall added: "He was a very popular and well-loved man. Men like him are literally a dying breed, and should never be forgotten. It would be a shame if his passing was to go unnoticed." Julie Willetts, the paratrooper's daughter said: "My dad was a very easy going, family orientated man. He was a massive Baggies fan and went to a lot of the matches."

His funeral was attended by more than 300 friends and family members, as well as five regimental standard bearers and a bugler who sounded The Last Post. Guests also donated to veterans' charity Help for Heroes raising £620 in his memory. The 59-year-old from Fairfield Avenue, Great Barr, added: "Despite all the amazing things he did, he never really spoke to me about what he had done in the war until the very end of his life. The stories I've been told about him are amazing." He also leaves two sons Terry, 66, and Paul, 44, seven grandchildren and four great grandchildren.

THROUGH THE YEARS

1983...

SHOPS were evacuated, traffic halted and Army bomb experts called in after officers became suspicious about an illegally parked car in Wolverhampton. A young motorist from Bolton had parked his Triumph 1500 outside the RAF and Royal Navy recruiting offices in Bell Street.

A LEADING Midland department store was reopening after a major revamp, immediately after the Christmas sales frenzy. Crossroads star Jane Rossington was joined by Mayor of Dudley Councillor David Caunt for the reopening of Cooks of Dudley.

THE personal hi-fi craze was putting the hearing of thousands of young people at risk, warned four leading organisations for the deaf. The Association for the Hard of Hearing, the British Deaf Association, the Royal National Institute for the Deaf and the National Deaf Children's Society said loud disco music and home headsets were also a threat to hearing.

1993...

A PRISONER who resembled 'something out of Star Wars' after being encased from the waste up in bandages went missing from a hospital in Evesham after being treated for a spinal injury. But a search was called off when the man arrived back at Long Lartin jail near Evesham before the officers escorting him. His mother said he had misunderstood the arrangements and made his own way back.

THERE was little festive cheer in Bosnia, with a ceasefire agreed the previous week by the warring Croats, Serbs and Muslims being ignored as fighting continued.

Meanwhile, the IRA defiantly said it would continue its terror attacks in an unrepentant end-of-year message.

2003...

BOB Monkhouse died aged 75, following a two-and-a-half-year battle with prostate cancer. It was the ATV series The Golden Shot in 1967 which truly established him as the king of the television gameshow.

EXPLOSIONS that could be heard for miles around rocked the Black Country when six oxygen tanks exploded in a van parked outside a pub. The van, which had been stolen from a pharmaceutical firm in Tamworth, had been set alight at 11.30pm after it was parked outside the Horse and Jockey pub in Bilston. Windows at the pub and a nearby amusement arcade were shattered.

AVERAGE house prices in West Bromwich had risen by 15 per cent over the previous 12 months, putting it seventh in a national table of property 'hotspots'.



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LETTERS

Bostin' ventures worth supporting

THERE are two things I would like to bring to the public's attention. Firstly, I was kindly asked to give a talk/performance at the new Dudley archives, situated next to the Black Country Museum. On thanking the team for their invite and the audience, who seemed to enjoy the event, I want to say what a magnificent space the archive is.

After spending years travelling up to Roseville, the new building offers a modern experience, if that's the right word. The spacious inviting foyer, meeting rooms and cool green tones of the flooring lends itself to the backdrop

of the wooded zoo and the museum on the other side. I'm sure it will be an enormous success and will be more community functional than the new Birmingham Library which, although an incredibly interesting building, has the feel of a tourist attraction.

My second point to raise is Black Country Community Radio, which can be listened to on the net every day. I and Lozz were invited to host shows on alternate fortnights as a way of bringing the Black Country to its listeners.

Fizzog, the brilliant local theatre group, also do a show as do other pre-

senters from around the region. A tremendous amount of hard work goes into the venture by loads of folk working behind the scenes with the objective of getting an FM licence.

So here's your chance to support two new ventures that are both all about our region and people. The archives opens in January and our shows go out at 10pm on Mondays and 6pm on Fridays. Give em' both a go they're bostin'!

DR B DAKIN
(BILLY SPAKE MON)
Tower Road
Tividale

Outdoor gym just a waste of money

KINVER seems to have a habit of having money wasted.

A few weeks ago I took my son to the skate park on the marsh playing fields. I haven't been down there since I was at Edgecliff School. I was surprised to see the Legion is closed and the building is becoming derelict and overgrown with bushes to the side of it.

As I drove round by the KCA there's the kid's park and a nice new outdoor gym with not a single person using it, unlike the skate park where ten to 15 kids were enjoying themselves. Why waste money on an outdoor gym? It might be okay on a beach in California, but come on, Kinver? And there's already a gym in the school.

What a total waste of money. It would have been better spent on a BMX track or a bigger skate park.

J GUEST
Elmwood Road
Stourbridge

LETTERS to the Editor

POST

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Letters should be brief and MUST include name, address and telephone number of the writer. The Editor reserves the right to condense letters.

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A big thank you from Lions Club sleigh fundraisers

THE Kingswinford and Stourbridge Lions Club would like to say a very big thank you to everyone who gave so generously during our annual Santa Sleigh tour around Kingswinford and Stourbridge.

To all of the grown-ups and children, who braved the wet weather to meet Santa we hope you had a very Happy Christmas.

During our travels Santa and his Sleigh collected £8,063 which will be distributed by the Club to nominated charities at a presentation evening to be held at the Stourbridge Institute and Social Club on Monday, January 27.

We would also like to thank the management of Sainsbury's Amblecote, Asda Brierley Hill, The Ryemarket and ALDI Wollaston for allowing us to collect during December. Money collected at these locations will be shared between Compton Hospice and Mary Stevens, as well as other local charities.

J ZULIK
Santa Sleigh Master 2013
Kingswinford and Stourbridge Lions Club

Call a halt on market place £6m scheme

IT BEGGARS belief that Dudley Council have given the go ahead on works to the market place costing some £6 million pounds plus, at the time of austerity measures imposed by this coalition government.

Dudley Council have to find over £57ms in cuts, they have just been told they will also get £15m pounds less in grant money and they still intend to carry on with these unwanted works on the market place.

It should be stopped immediately.

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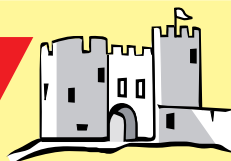


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MEMORY LANE



Supporters of the Dudley Hippodrome celebrate the venue's 75th anniversary



An interior shot of the Hippodrome taken in 1957



Dudley Hippodrome, which opened in 1938, during its heyday in the 1950s



Comedy duo Laurel & Hardy also played there



Bob Hope, second left, at the venue back in 1957

Hippodrome's future still hangs in balance

By Mark Andrews

THE opening of the new Dudley Hippodrome, attended by local luminaries such as Wimbledon champion Dorothy Round, was billed as the greatest event on Dudley's social calendar in 1938.

Just over 75 years on, the future of the venue – which once played host to the giants of showbusiness – hangs in the balance.

The likes of Laurel and Hardy, Bob Hope, and Chico Marx all played there, as well as rising stars Ken Dodd, Morecambe & Wise and Bruce Forsyth all played there.

Dudley Council, which bought the building in 2010, had planned to demolish it as part of a regeneration project, but the plans were put on ice in August following concerted protests by the Friends of Dudley Hippodrome. In its heyday,

it was the biggest theatre in the West Midlands, according to historian Paul Collins. For its first 15 years, the Hippodrome was considered to be Britain's most modern variety theatre.

Its 1953 production of Jack and the Beanstalk, starring Harry Secombe, was the first pantomime to be screened live on TV.

Ironically, television was probably the Hippodrome's downfall as it struggled for audiences, and was making considerable losses by the late 1950s.

The Kennedy family, which had opened the theatre, gave up in 1958, putting their business into liquidation. The Hippodrome continued as a theatre under a string of different owners, but was increasingly being used for other forms of entertainment. Wrestling nights became a regular fixture in the

early 60s, then striptease shows, and gradually it evolved into a bingo hall.

In 1973 it was taken over by Ladbroke's and renamed Cesar's Palace. Variety acts such as Mike and Bernie Winters, Ken Dodd and Tommy Steele continued to appear, but in the form of late night cabaret once bingo had finished.

The Hippodrome's fate appeared to have been sealed when Dudley Council applied to demolish it, having dismissed the Friends' business plan as requiring up to £10 million worth of investment. But the Hippodrome received a stay of execution when a decision was deferred.

More than 32,000 people have signed a petition calling for the theatre to be saved, and there is no shortage of ideas, or volunteers, offering to help with its restoration.



Tommy Cooper at the theatre during King of Hearts in 1954



Ken Dodd (top) celebrates the Hippodrome's birthday in 1957

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Zoo is being restored to its former glory



Chief executive Peter Suddock takes a look at refurbishment standing on the main entrance roof at Dudley Zoological Gardens

IT HAS been a familiar sight to generations of visitors passing through the turnstiles at Dudley Zoo. Now the iconic wave entrance at the Castle Hill attraction is being carefully restored to ensure it welcomes many more families for years to come.

The eye-catching building is one of two of the zoo's historic Tecton structures, which were first constructed more than 70 years ago, using pre-stressed concrete – a pioneering system at the time.

And now staff are carrying on the tradition with ground-breaking work to carry out repairs on two of these famous structures – the first time this has been done with concrete buildings.

Status

The Tecton structures date back to the mid-1930s when architects were able to mould the concrete to create attractive enclosures to fit in with the landscape and the steep slopes of the Castle Hill site.

Today the zoo has the world's largest single collection of Tecton buildings and in 2009 all 12 structures received World Monuments Fund status, alongside Machu Picchu and the Taj Mahal.

The wave entrance and the Safari Shop are among four that are being renovated thanks to cash from part of a wider £1.15 million lottery-funded programme.

Work began in September and has seen the zoo join forces with history experts to ensure accurate materials and techniques are used.

Members of the 20th Century Society have helped the attraction find the exact concrete formula used to make the buildings so it can be recreated for the restoration.

Special report by Heather Large

Meanwhile, chief executive of what is officially called Dudley Zoological Gardens, Peter Suddock has also attended a four-day course in Sussex on concrete mixing and building repair to understand the work that is involved.

He said: "It's going really well. We started at the end of September with the aim of getting the concrete repairs done before Christmas. We're looking on target. We needed to get them done before it gets frosty as it's too cold then to work on the concrete."

During the work staff have also discovered the original paint scheme for both the shop and entrance – terracotta red and a light sky blue, which they are looking to recreate.

"It's looking really brilliant. We're discovering things we didn't know about," Mr Suddock said. "We found the original slab floor in the shop and we've been looking at how to make it fit for modern use."

Windows, glass and doors will be installed in the shop before it is fitted out ready to welcome visitors by Easter.

During the work, which has seen the zoo run an apprentice-training scheme with Dudley College, the shop's contents and sign have been relocated to a temporary site next to the chairlift.

The turnstiles will be re-fitted in the wave entrance with the concrete given a lick of paint.

In March work will start on the other two Tecton structures due to be refurbished – the bear ravine and kiosk 1.

The restoration project, which also included repairing and re-opening the chairlift last year, is being funded by the zoo, which will invest £600,000 on a retail complex, Tecton interpretation centre and upgrading toilets and food outlets. New service roads are also being constructed.



Refurbishment work is under way at the shop at Dudley Zoo



The iconic turnstile entrance at the zoo is due to get a revamp

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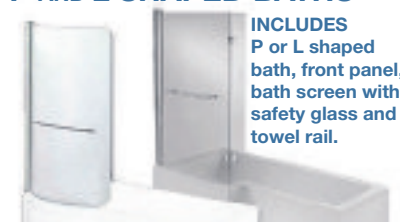
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Tennis club gets revamp



Management team members and guests at the Stourbridge Lawn Tennis and Squash Club at their new HQ

ACE. That's how members of a tennis and squash club rate their headquarters after a £350,000 makeover.

The stunning centrepiece of the redevelopment of Stourbridge Lawn Tennis and Squash Club, in Sugar Loaf Lane, Iwerley, is a steel and glass balcony running the length of the building.

The club's 10-year-old gym has been extended and a shower area for people with disabilities has been created, as well as improved access for wheelchairs.

"It had been 40 years since we last had a major facelift," said chairman of development at the club Phil Davis. "We wanted to provide one of the best facilities in the area, with a new modern look for our 1,300 members – and I think we have achieved that."

"It looks fantastic. All the members who have seen it are delighted."

The club remained open during the three-month project carried out by A&H Construction. A bank loan and club balances helped pay for the work.

The balcony gives a panoramic view of the centre's competition courts, so members and visitors can enjoy watching matches.

Stourbridge Lawn Tennis and Squash Club boasts a total of 14 tennis courts and six for squash and racketball.

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NEWS

Countdown but not out after loss

A COUNTDOWN aficionado from Cradley Heath says he isn't quite ready to hang up his vowels and consonants despite his defeat in the show's semi final.

Glen Webb has lived and breathed the word and number game since he was 17, when he managed to get through to the quarter-finals of Channel 4's longest-running show.

After more than 21 years, he returned to the TV brain-teaser and remained unbeaten for nine matches in a row – scoring the second highest score in the show's history after racking up an astonishing 141 points out of a possible 145 in the fifth game of his stint.

He managed to go one step further, making it to December 19's semi final but the



Glen Webb reached semi

39-year-old from Sandwell Grove was defeated by 17-year-old Callum Todd, who won the match with a score of 107 to Glen's 82.

Glen said: "I only got a couple of hours' sleep before that day's filming because of a sickness, and by the time it came to our match I wasn't

as sharp as I am normally. I don't want people to think I am making excuses, I was defeated by a worthy opponent who deserved to win."

Earlier it had seemed that he was on the path to being crowned champion after defeating Jonathan Liew in the quarter-final with a 107-45 victory.

"I hope to continue playing the game at some of the national tournaments and might even train one of my friends to see if he can win the show," added the financial planner, who works for English Mutual in Worcester. "I hope to one day be invited back to play in a champion of champions match."

Glen is a member of apterous.org, an online Countdown community.

Sailor aunt flying flag for her newborn niece

'GIRL, Poppy, Perfect'. Those were the only words that sailor Natalie Parkes managed to glean from a phone call home before returning to the bridge aboard HMS Illustrious as the ship steered through the Strait of Hormuz.

But the naval rating from Stourbridge – proud as punch at becoming an auntie to her policeman brother Tom's first baby, Poppy – has now sent the little girl a special wave of love from across the seas.

As she will be away serving in the Gulf over Christmas, she wanted to make sure her family back home – and particularly Poppy – knew how much she was thinking of them. With shipmates she spelled out the words 'Auntie Natty Loves You' from a gun turret aboard the frigate HMS Montrose, on which she is now serving, and took a picture of it to send a message to Poppy and the rest of her family in Stourbridge.

On the day of the birth, on October 20, Able Rating Natalie, aged 25, was on duty as operational narrative aboard Illustrious, helping to guide it through the busy Strait of Hormuz in the Gulf.

She is now serving on Plymouth-based HMS Montrose, currently deployed to the Gulf, where Natalie is carrying out maritime security operations and regional engagement.

College

Natalie, whose parents, Steve, aged 53, and Lynne, 52, live in Stourton, and who attended King Edward VI sixth form college in Stourbridge, started her deployment two months before Poppy was born.

All she could hear in her brief call home before returning to the bridge on the day of the birth was 'Girl, Poppy, Perfect'.

But every day since that phone call Natalie has received an emailed photo of her niece, from her Baggies fan brother, Sandwell Pc Tom Parkes, and sister-in-law Zoe, both aged 28, from Wordsley. It will be early next year before Poppy finally gets to meet her aunt. In a special message to her family back home Natalie said: "I always knew being away at Christmas would be a testing time but the constant support from home and the knowledge that you're a part of something important makes it all worthwhile. I want to wish everyone in my family a Merry Christmas, especially Poppy who I cannot wait to get home and meet in person."

Poppy's mother, Zoe, said: "It's amazing that, although she's so far away Natalie is thinking about us – and we love and miss her too." And now Poppy has responded with her very own special message to her aunt: "Merry Christmas Auntie Natty!! 84 sleeps to meet you!!"



Natalie Parkes, standing, on the frigate HMS Montrose with her shipmates who are holding her big and bold message of love for her newborn baby niece Poppy



Sleeping baby Poppy with parents Tom and Zoe Parkes and a message for her aunt

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NEWS

Party send-off for two leaders of charity group



A fond farewell – Ron Dalton and Geoff Hill who are retiring from their roles at Age Concern Stourbridge and Halesowen 'THEY will be a very hard act to follow' – that's just one of the tributes given to veterans stepping down from their roles at a charity running day centres for older people.

Age Concern Stourbridge and Halesowen gave a fond farewell to Ron Dalton, who has been chairman for 20 years, and director Geoff Hill at an event.

Mince pies and mulled wine were served during the festive occasion which was attended by volunteers,

charity users and Stourbridge MP Margot James.

Mr Dalton, 78, said he had enjoyed his time as chairman but said the 'time was right' to make way for someone with fresh ideas to take the good cause into the future. Councillor Ken Turner has now taken over the role.

Devoting

Mr Hill, who owns the electrical superstore in Amblecote High Street and is a well-known charity worker, said he would now be devoting his energies to his own charitable trust.

He became a director of the charity around 10 years ago after working with the Mary Stevens Hospice.

The retirement event tied in with switching-on of the charity's Memory Tree.

Mr Dalton, of Sutton Coldfield, said: "When I first took over as chairman we had £4,000, a couple of old bangers for vehicles and a temporary building. Now we have the Elton Centre."

Councillor Turner said: "They will be a very hard act to follow.

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Tu	7	14	21	28
We	1	8	15	22 29
Th	2	9	16	23 30
Fr	3	10	17	24 31
Sa	4	11	18	25
Su	5	12	19	26

• March •				
Mo	3	10	17	24 31
Tu	4	11	18	25
We	5	12	19	26
Th	6	13	20	27
Fr	7	14	21	28
Sa	1	8	15	22 29
Su	2	9	16	23 30

• May •				
Mo	5	12	19	26
Tu	6	13	20	27
We	7	14	21	28
Th	1	8	15	22 29
Fr	2	9	16	23 30
Sa	3	10	17	24 31
Su	4	11	18	25

• July •				
Mo	7	14	21	28
Tu	1	8	15	22 29
We	2	9	16	23 30
Th	3	10	17	24 31
Fr	4	11	18	25
Sa	5	12	19	26
Su	6	13	20	27

• September •				
Mo	1	8	15	22 29
Tu	2	9	16	23 30
We	3	10	17	24
Th	4	11	18	25
Fr	5	12	19	26
Sa	6	13	20	27
Su	7	14	21	28

• November •				
Mo	3	10	17	24
Tu	4	11	18	25
We	5	12	19	26
Th	6	13	20	27
Fr	7	14	21	28
Sa	1	8	15	22 29
Su	2	9	16	23 30

NICLE

mna media

14

February

Mo	3	10	17	24
Tu	4	11	18	25
We	5	12	19	26
Th	6	13	20	27
Fr	7	14	21	28
Sa	1	8	15	22
Su	2	9	16	23

April

Mo	7	14	21	28
Tu	1	8	15	22
We	2	9	16	23
Th	3	10	17	24
Fr	4	11	18	25
Sa	5	12	19	26
Su	6	13	20	27

June

Mo	2	9	16	23	30
Tu	3	10	17	24	
We	4	11	18	25	
Th	5	12	19	26	
Fr	6	13	20	27	
Sa	7	14	21	28	
Su	1	8	15	22	29

August

Mo	4	11	18	25
Tu	5	12	19	26
We	6	13	20	27
Th	7	14	21	28
Fr	1	8	15	22
Sa	2	9	16	23
Su	3	10	17	24

October

Mo	6	13	20	27
Tu	7	14	21	28
We	1	8	15	22
Th	2	9	16	23
Fr	3	10	17	24
Sa	4	11	18	25
Su	5	12	19	26

December

Mo	1	8	15	22	29
Tu	2	9	16	23	30
We	3	10	17	24	31
Th	4	11	18	25	
Fr	5	12	19	26	
Sa	6	13	20	27	
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CLUB NEWS

**Six lucky
winners in
free raffle**

K'FORD TG

KINGSWINFORD Guild did not meet in the Community centre in December. Instead they visited The Lodge in Dudley and enjoyed a lavish Christmas Luncheon.

There was no formal business, but members were reminded of two national events, in April and in June which may appeal to them.

A box was circulated, so that members who wished to do so could make a charity donation instead of sending cards. However, some people did distribute cards.

There was a free raffle and the six prize winners were Ena Baker, Enid Fennell, Ann Rogers, Kath Turner, Margaret Farmer and Sylvia Taylor.

**Tribute to
sum raised**

K'FORD POPPY APPEAL

ORGANISERS of the Kingswinford Poppy Appeal have thanked the public for their generosity after £35,489.34 was raised.

Organiser Bob Townsend paid tribute to those who had given their time and money to the cause.

He also thanked the participants in the annual sponsored Poppy Walk, whose ages ranged from three years old to some who were in their 70s.

**Speaker brings the
spirit of Christmas**



Guest speaker Patricia Boyd and President Parkash at the December meeting

TWO guests attending the December meeting were welcomed by president Parkash.

Speaker was Patricia Boyd, who brought the spirit of Christmas past and present alive with an entertaining talk interspersed with poems, facts and verse from Victorian Christmas times to the present day. The vote of thanks was given by Audrey Coates.

This was followed by members donating food and miscellaneous items for The Well - Wolverhampton's Food Bank.

Participation began in October 2012, when it was agreed that the club would support by collecting food and delivering to the warehouse. To now, some 455kg of food

WOLVERHAMPTON SOROPTIMISTS

and items has been given as a way of providing supplies to local people in need.

For many years at Christmas, the club has collected for The Church of the Good Shepherd Trust who this year had requested ring can pull-food items and men's clothing, particularly underwear.

Coupled with the above, presents are always collected for The Haven Charity to enable children and parents to enjoy a safer Christmas.

Membership fees to rise

WORDSLEY M TG

and at The Holly Bush, Penn on February 3.

Speaker Ken Gilks gave a humorous 'Odes of Life and Laughter' repartee with memories of his childhood. Pat Hadley gave the vote of

thanks. The bring and share refreshments were then served.

The next guild meeting is on Monday February 17 when there will be a quiz and membership renewal.

Guild membership will be raised by £1 with a £1 entrance at each meeting.



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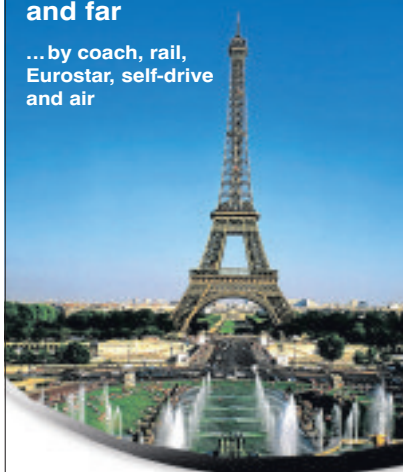
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learn

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Please take a moment to look through our latest list of courses which are starting in January. We are offering one-day taster sessions and workshops in many subjects to give people the opportunity to try a subject before signing up to a longer course.

Courses are held across the borough in neighbourhood learning centres, libraries, schools and other community venues during the daytime, evenings and weekends.

We are also offering courses and workshops at the new Archives and Local History Centre in Dudley. Courses here start throughout the Spring term.

For more information please contact the centre where the course is running.

Course title	Weeks	Start	Day	Time	Cost
All Saints Church Sedgley					
Fred Richings / Emma Balme 01384 812337					
Gentle Exercise for mature people	10	22/01/14	Wed	11:30-12:30	£25
Brierley Hill Neighbourhood Learning Centre					
Kim Thompson-Jones / Geri Nardiello 01384 812371					
Art - creative with pastels	10	21/01/14	Tue	16:30-18:30	£52
Computers taster	3	15/01/14	Wed	13:00-15:00	£15
Computer skills for e-mails	10	15/01/14	Wed	13:00-15:00	£52
Computer skills for word processing	10	15/01/14	Wed	13:00-15:00	£52
Computers for beginners	10	23/01/14	Thu	12:30-14:30	£52
Computers and the Internet	10	15/01/14	Wed	13:00-15:00	£52
ESOL - English for Speakers of Other Languages	10	22/01/14	Wed	12:30-14:30	£102
Functional Skills - English	12	07/01/14	Tue	09:30-12:00	Free
Functional Skills - English	10	20/01/14	Mon	10:00-12:00	Free
Functional Skills - English	10	20/01/14	Mon	13:00-15:00	Free
Functional Skills - English	13	10/01/14	Fri	09:30-12:00	Free
Functional Skills - Maths	10	24/01/14	Fri	09:30-11:30	Free
Functional Skills - Maths	13	09/01/14	Thu	09:30-12:00	Free
Functional Skills - Maths	13	10/01/14	Fri	12:30-15:00	Free
History - World War 1 Commemoration	6	22/01/14	Wed	19:00-21:00	£26
History - World War 1 Commemoration	6	21/01/14	Tue	12:30-14:30	£26
Sage Accounting*	15	14/01/14	Tue	12:30-15:00	Ring
Brierley Hill Scout Hut					
Kim Thompson-Jones / Geri Nardiello 01384 812371					
Zumba	10	14/01/14	Tue	13:30-14:30	£27
Castle & Priory Neighbourhood Learning Centre					
Emma Balme / Fred Richings 01384 812337					
Computers - a taster course for beginners	3	13/01/14	Mon	13:00-15:00	£15
Computer skills for word processing	10	13/01/14	Mon	09:30-11:30	£52
Computer skills for e-mails	10	13/01/14	Mon	13:00-15:00	£52
Computers - beginners Internet and e-mail	10	21/01/14	Tue	10:00-12:00	£50
Construction Trades - taster day	1	22/01/14	Wed	10:00-15:00	Free
Festive Arts and Crafts	4	19/03/14	Wed	13:00-15:00	£25
Level 2 Floristry Qualification - a taster course	3	20/01/14	Mon	10:00-12:00	Ring
Flower Arranging - mixed abilities	10	20/01/14	Mon	12:30-14:30	£55
Meditation - an Introduction	4	21/01/14	Tue	13:00-14:00	£10
Live 4 Less - managing your money better	6	23/01/14	Thu	12:30-14:30	Free
Love, Gifts and Crafts - Valentine special	3	22/01/14	Wed	13:00-15:00	£20
Sewing - make a textile bag	6	20/01/14	Mon	10:00-12:00	£30
Dudley Library					
Fred Richings / Emma Balme 01384 812337					
Computers - a taster course for beginners	3	13/01/14	Mon	09:30-11:30	£15
Computer skills for word processing	10	13/01/14	Mon	09:30-11:30	£52
Computer skills for e-mails	10	13/01/14	Mon	09:30-11:30	£52
Computers skills for the Internet	10	13/01/14	Mon	09:30-11:30	£52

Course title	Weeks	Start	Day	Time	Cost
Dudley Wood Neighbourhood Learning Centre					
Glen Ostins 01384 816471					
Reflexology - an introduction	6	06/01/14	Mon	10:00-12:00	£32
Alternative and Complementary Therapy	6	06/01/14	Mon	10:00-12:00	£26
Anxiety Management - recognise & control symptoms	10	14/01/14	Tue	10:00-12:00	£52
Award in Preparing to Work in Adult Social Care - Level 1	9	15/01/14	Wed	10:00-12:00	£110
Baby Massage	5	16/01/14	Thu	13:00-14:00	£14.50
Computers taster	3	16/01/14	Thu	13:00-15:00	£15
Computers taster	3	16/01/14	Thu	09:30-11:30	£15
Computer skills for Emails	10	16/01/14	Thu	13:00-15:00	£52
Computer skills for Emails	10	16/01/14	Thu	09:30-11:30	£52
Computer Skills for word processing	10	16/01/14	Thu	13:00-15:00	£52
Computer Skills for word processing	10	16/01/14	Thu	09:30-11:30	£52
Computers - Internet	10	16/01/14	Thu	13:00-15:00	£52
Computers - Internet	10	16/01/14	Thu	09:30-11:30	£52
Computers Skills	10	16/01/14	Thu	09:30-11:30	£52
Computers Skills	10	16/01/14	Thu	13:00-15:00	£52
Exercise - keep fit	6	06/01/14	Mon	13:00-14:00	£14
Family Learning - Music and Crafts for Kids	5	16/01/14	Thu	10:00-11:30	£17
Functional Skills - English	12	13/01/14	Mon	09:30-11:30	Free
Functional Skills - English	12	09/01/14	Thu	12:45-14:45	Free
Functional Skills - English and Maths	13	06/01/14	Mon	12:30-14:30	Free
Functional Skills - English and Maths	13	07/01/14	Tue	12:45-14:45	Free
Functional Skills - English and Maths	13	07/01/14	Tue	10:00-12:00	Free
Functional Skills - Maths	13	06/01/14	Mon	12:30-14:30	Free
Music Tots	5	16/01/14	Thu	10:00-11:30	£20
Office Skills	10	14/01/14	Tue	10:00-12:00	£52
Photography - beginners and intermediate	6	09/01/14	Thu	17:30-19:30	£26
Pilates - beginners and intermediate	10	15/01/14	Wed	12:30-13:30	£22
Sewing Machines and other Craft skills	10	17/01/14	Fri	10:00-12:00	£52
Yoga	10	07/01/14	Tue	17:30-18:30	£22
Elizabeth House Residential Home, Lye					
Craig Myatt 01384 816463					
Gentle Exercise for older people	12	14/01/14	Tue	15:00-16:00	£32
Fens Pool Community Centre					
Kim Thompson-Jones 01384 812371					
Sewing-all Levels	10	14/01/14	Tue	10:00-12:00	£52
Halesowen Library					
Glen Ostins 01384 816471					
Functional Skills - English	12	13/01/14	Mon	13:00-15:00	Free
Computers taster	3	14/01/14	Tue	09:30-11:30	£15
Computers taster	3	15/01/14	Wed	09:30-11:30	£15
Computer skills for e-mails	10	14/01/14	Tue	09:30-11:30	£52
Computer skills for e-mails	10	15/01/14	Wed	09:30-11:30	£52
Computer skills for word processing	10	14/01/14	Tue	09:30-11:30	£52
Computer skills for word processing	10	15/01/14	Wed	09:30-11:30	£52
Computer skills for the Internet	10	14/01/14	Tue	09:30-11:30	£52
Computer skills for the Internet	10	15/01/14	Wed	09:30-11:30	£52
Kingswinford Library					
Kim Thompson-Jones 01384 812371					
Art and Design - introduction	5	13/01/14	Mon	12:45-14:45	£27
Computers taster	3	15/01/14	Wed	13:00-15:00	£2
Computer skills for e-mails	10	15/01/14	Wed	13:00-15:00	£52
Computer skills for word processing	10	15/01/14	Wed	13:00-15:00	£52
Computers skills for the Internet	10	15/01/14	Wed	13:00-15:00	£52
Flower Arranging Workshop - all levels	1	20/01/14	Mon	10:00-12:00	Free
Flower Arranging Workshop - all levels	1	20/01/14	Mon	10:00-12:00	Free
Flower Arranging - all levels	3	27/01/14	Mon	10:00-12:00	£17
Jewellery Making Workshop	1	23/01/14	Thu	10:00-12:00	Free
Jewellery Making Workshop	1	23/01/14	Thu	10:00-12:00	Free
Jewellery Making	3	30/01/14	Thu	10:00-12:00	£17
Leasowes High School					
Kevin Pearson 01384 816287 / 07825 194160					
Black Country Crafts	10	14/01/14	Tue	19:00-21:00	£50
Glass Art Crafts	10	13/01/14	Mon	19:00-21:00	£50
Drama and performing arts - mixed abilities	10	14/01/14	Tue	19:00-21:00	£50
French for beginners	5	15/01/14	Wed	19:00-21:00	£25
French-intermediate and advanced Level	10	15/01/14	Wed	19:00-21:00	£50
Guitars - learn from the legends	10	14/01/14	Tue	19:00-21:00	£50
Jewellery Making	10	13/01/14	Mon	19:00-21:00	£50
Keyboard Music for beginners	10	13/01/14	Mon	19:00-21:00	£50
Digital Photography for beginners	10	14/01/14	Tue	19:00-21:00	£50
Pilates for beginners	10	14/01/14	Tue	18:30-20:00	£37.50
Portrait Painting	10	15/01/14	Wed	19:00-21:00	£50
Pottery - all levels	10	14/01/14	Tue	19:00-21:00	£50
Water Colour Painting - all levels	10	15/01/14	Wed	19:00-21:00	£50
Water Colour Painting - intermediate	10	17/01/14	Fri	14:00-17:00	£75
Yoga for beginners	10	13/01/14	Mon	19:30-21:00	£37.50
Yoga and Meditation	10	13/01/14	Mon	19:00-21:00	£50
Choral Singing for beginners	3	24/01/14	Fri	14:30-16:30	£15

Course title	Weeks	Start	Day	Time	Cost
Margaret Vine Sheltered Housing Kath Glazzard 01384 816496					
Gentle Exercise for older people	10	06/01/14	Mon	13:30-14:30	£27
Myles Court, Brierley Hill Kim Thompson-Jones 01384 812371					
Keep Fit - gentle exercise	13	09/01/14	Thu	10:00-11:00	£27
Nene Close Sheltered Housing - Stourbridge Kim Thompson-Jones 01384 812371					
Keep Fit - gentle exercise	13	09/01/14	Thu	13:30-14:30	£34.50
Pensnett & Brockmoor Neighbourhood Learning Centre Sarah Carr / Craig Myatt 01384 816440					
Art and Crafts using polymer clay	10	17/01/14	Fri	13:00-15:00	£52
Art - drawing and painting techniques	10	17/01/14	Fri	11:00-13:00	£52
Computers taster course	3	16/01/14	Thu	13:00-15:00	£15
Computer skills for e-mails	10	16/01/14	Thu	13:00-15:00	£52
Computer Skills for word processing	10	16/01/14	Thu	13:00-15:00	£52
Computers skills for the Internet	10	16/01/14	Thu	13:00-15:00	£52
Counselling - Introduction	10	15/01/14	Wed	19:00-21:00	£52
Functional Skills - English	10	13/01/14	Mon	09:45-11:45	Free
Functional Skills - English	10	14/01/14	Tue	19:00-21:00	Free
Functional Skills Maths	13	08/01/14	Wed	12:30-15:00	Free
Functional Skills - Maths	10	07/01/14	Tue	19:00-21:00	Free
Family History - who do you think you are?	10	13/01/14	Mon	18:45-20:45	£52
Family History - who do you think you are?	10	14/01/14	Tue	10:00-12:00	£52
Family History - who do you think you are?	10	14/01/14	Tue	13:00-15:00	£52
Introduction to Childcare	10	16/01/14	Thu	10:00-12:00	£52
Maths-fast track to Level 2 Maths	*	*	Wed	19:00-21:00	Free
Sign Language - an introduction	10	14/01/14	Tue	09:45-11:45	£52
Silver Jubilee Healthy Hub Fred Richings / Emma Balme 01384 812337					
Yoga - mixed abilities	10	20/01/14	Mon	10:30-11:30	£25
St. Paul's Community Centre Kim Thompson-Jones 01384 812371					
Zumba tone	10	13/01/14	Mon	12:00-13:00	£27.50
Stourbridge Library Kim Thompson-Jones / Geri Nardiello 01384 812371					
Computers taster	3	13/01/14	Mon	13:00-15:00	£15
Computers taster	3	15/01/14	Wed	09:30-11:30	£15
Computer skills for e-mails	10	13/01/14	Mon	13:00-15:00	£52
Computer skills for e-mails	10	15/01/14	Wed	09:30-11:30	£52
Computer skills for word processing	10	13/01/14	Mon	13:00-15:00	£52
Computer skills for word processing	10	15/01/14	Wed	09:30-11:30	£52
Computer skills for the Internet	10	13/01/14	Mon	13:00-15:00	£52
Computer skills for the Internet	10	15/01/14	Wed	09:30-11:30	£52
The Savoy Centre Glen Ostins 01384 816471					
Sage Accounting - computer software	6	28/02/14	Fri	12:45-14:45	£26
Computers taster	3	14/01/14	Tue	13:00-15:00	£15
Book Keeping - an introduction	6	10/01/14	Fri	12:45-14:45	£26
Computer skills for e-mails	10	14/01/14	Tue	13:00-15:00	£52
Computer skills for word processing	10	14/01/14	Tue	13:00-15:00	£52
Computer skills for the Internet	10	14/01/14	Tue	13:00-15:00	£52
Computer skills	10	14/01/14	Tue	13:00-15:00	£52
Talbot Hotel Stourbridge Kim Thompson-Jones 01384 812371					
Creative Crafts - all Levels	4	22/01/14	Wed	13:00-15:00	£22
Water Colour Painting - all levels	5	13/01/14	Mon	10:30-13:30	£47
Windsor High School and Sixth Form Kath Glazzard 01384 816496					
ESOL - English for Speakers of Other Languages	10	13/01/14	Mon	09:10-11:10	Free
Woodside Community School and Children's Centre Kim Thompson-Jones 01384 812371					
ESOL - English for Speakers of Other Languages	10	14/01/14	Tue	12:30-14:30	£102
Mixed Crafts	5	15/01/14	Wed	13:00-15:00	£27
Aerobics - all levels	5	20/01/14	Mon	17:00-18:00	£14.50
Yemeni Centre Kath Glazzard 01384 816496					
ESOL for Men - English for Speakers of Other Languages	10	13/01/14	Mon	10:00-12:00	£102



Artspace at 4 Birdcage Walk in Dudley offers a range of arts and crafts workshops - please call 07972 735210 for details.

Live4Less

The Live4Less course offers tips and practical advice about how to manage your money better. Learn about how to make savings on your household bills, cooking on a budget and how to improve your finances. The course lasts for 6 weeks with a 2 hour session every week. For details contact Keith Richards on 01384 812376

The Archives and Local History Centre

Fred Richings / Emma Balme 01384 812337

Adult and family learning courses are now available at the newly opened Archives and Local History Centre.

The new centre, which is located next to the Black Country Museum on the Tipton Road in Dudley, is the perfect place to start tracing your family history. To help beginners get started there is a new course starting in January called Family History - getting started. Other courses include women's history and World War 1.

The state-of-the-art building will also be home to the borough's historic collections including maps, newspapers, books, photographs, written records and census data dating as far back as the 12th century. For more information about The Archives call 01384 812770.

British Sign Language - taster session	1	13/02/14	Thu	09:30-12:30	£10
British Sign Language - taster session	1	13/02/14	Thu	12:30-3:00	£10
Digital Photography - analogue to digital	4	21/01/14	Tue	10:00-12:00	£20
Architectural Photography	3	25/02/14	Tue	10:00-12:00	£15
Family History - getting started	1	25/02/14	Tue	13:00-15:00	£5
Family History - who do you think you are?	6	04/03/14	Tue	13:00-15:00	£30
Creative Writing	6	27/01/14	Mon	18:00-20:00	£30
Watercolours - taster session	1	22/01/14	Wed	13:00-15:00	£10
Painting Local Scenes Using Watercolours	6	29/01/14	Wed	13:00-15:00	£40
Photography - Still Life	3	18/03/14	Tue	10:00-12:00	£15
Social Media - taster session	1	22/01/14	Wed	17:00-19:00	£5
Social Media for beginners	4	29/01/14	Wed	17:00-19:00	£20
Valentine Special - flower arranging	1	30/01/14	Thu	10:00-14:00	£20
Vintage Flowers - Mother's Day gifts	1	07/03/14	Fri	09:30-12:30	£20
Wedding Flower Arrangements	5	24/01/14	Fri	09:30-12:00	£20
Women's History - a taster session	1	21/01/14	Tue	13:00-14:30	£5
Women's History - an introduction	3	28/01/14	Tue	13:00-15:00	£15
Sewing - create a Downton Abbey costume	11	24/01/14	Fri	10:00-12:30	£60
Yoga for seniors - a taster session	1	21/01/14	Tue	14:45-15:45	£2.50
Yoga for seniors	6	28/01/14	Tue	14:45-15:45	£15
Creative Writing and World War 1	1	20/01/14	Mon	18:00-20:00	£5
History - World War 1 Commemoration	3	20/01/14	Mon	18:00-20:00	£15
Making a Fascinator	6	24/01/14	Fri	13:00-15:00	£35

Family Learning *price per family

Brierley Hill Neighbourhood Learning Centre

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What's On! Stourbridge

Festive fun with Cerys

Cerys Matthews
Town Hall, Birmingham

THERE are two words which sum up a Cerys Matthews show, great fun. The Welsh singer/song-writer and BBC Radio 6 presenter rarely stops talking, with the exception of when she is singing but she is such an enthusiastic and engaging character.

She opened the first of her two sets on the bar with a Woody Guthrie song, 'Who's Gonna Shoe Your Pretty Little Feet?', Matthews' valley spring tones filled the Town Hall with a haunting version of the tune.

Most of her songs have a lengthy introduction and she openly boasted that the longest preamble she has done to date was at the longest Glee Club, where she chatted for 21 minutes between songs.

When she finally got around to singing Johnny Come Lately, from her Catatonia days, there was more than a hint of Kate Bush about her tones.

A Welsh language song Moliannwn came from her Hulla Baloo album which is totally in Welsh.

She treated the audience to Chardonnay, from her Cockatoo album, followed by a great version of Jingle Bells and a traditional Deck The Halls followed by a funky version of Ding Dong Merrily on High, again with the audience brought in to provide vocal support.

Danny Farragher

Gok glitz and giggles too in pantomime makeover

Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs, Birmingham Hippodrome

MAKING his panto debut in Birmingham, fashion guru Gok Wan should be renamed Gok the giggler as he is obviously enjoying his pantomime makeover as much as the audience.

Judging by his vocal performance, a singing career is probably off the agenda but for glitz, glamour and celebrity wow factor, not to mention outfits that look like they've been designed for Ming the Merciless, Gok as the Man in the Mirror is most definitely on style.

Dragon

But he is only part of the ensemble that make Brume spectacular panto a surefire hit with lots of singing, dancing, slapstick and naughty humour – plus a fearsome flying dragon that looks more than capable of wolfing down seven dwarves and probably a hobbit too.

Gok not the only first timer in panto land, song and dance man Gary Wilmott shows there's nothing like a Dame to raise the fun factor. As Nora Crumple, the castle cook, he is the focus for some of the funniest routines and also brings a tear to the eye with a charming song about motherhood.

As Snow White, Over The Rainbow winner Danielle Hope, who has now played both Dorothy and Epoxide in the West End, is an excellent singer with the kind of smile that lights up a room and is dressed just like her animated Disney predecessor.

Despite this being her first panto too, Miss Hope could hold her own with showbiz and soap stalwart

Review by Leon Burakowski

John Partridge who, as Prince John, gives 100 per cent in enthusiasm and energy.

This show also boasts two funny-men with ventriloquist and comic Paul Zerline and Brian Conley-lookalike Matt Slack as brothers Muddies and Oddson.

Or maybe that should be three, because Zerline puppet Sam seems to have a life of his own, despite a technical hitch on press night that rubbed a little magic off the puppet's big moment.

Completing the package is former The Colbys and Dynasty star Stephanie Beacham as a superbly hissable wicked queen – important enough to have Gok as her personal style consultant – and the magnificent seven themselves. The dwarves are not played by the height-challenged but seven actors in ingenious, hilarious costumes that must leave them with very sore knees.

All in all, this year's Hippodrome panto is like a Gok makeover – fabulous – and it continues until February 2.



Wicked Queen Sadista (Stephanie Beacham) puts a spell on Oddjob (Matt Slack) in Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs at Birmingham Hippodrome



Gok Wan as The Man in the Mirror



Danielle Hope as Snow White

Music from around world

Magical Christmas Tree Show, Newhampton Folk Club
IF YOU are bold enough to sing House of the Rising Sun to the tune of Little Town of Bethlehem and Rock Around the Clock in mediaeval Middle English then, if only for novelty value, you are worth listening to.

The one thing you can say about the trio Chris Parkinson, Pete Morton and Emily Sanders, who was standing in for the ill Maggie Boyle, is their festive may not be traditional but it's damn good entertainment. They opened with The Mountain Road and Christmas Eve with Parkinson on melodeon, Morton guitar and Sanders on fiddle. Right from the off, they had come to have a good time.

The magical Christmas tree of the title was a rather pathetic looking specimen but it was really only there to let the audience pick scrolls from the branches which had instructions for the group. One such was for music from around the world. Parkinson opened with a Moldova tune on accordion then Morton took over singing Malaika, which means angel in Swahili, and Sanders played a gorgeous version of Hava Nagila on fiddle.

Sanders put on clogs to give a traditional dance to the tune of Byker Hill. Things turned surreal as Morton picked up a tune which started as Greensleeves but moved into the Middle Ages version of Rock Around The Clock. You have to hear it to really appreciate it. This was the last show of 2013 for the folk club but thankfully it will be back later this year.

DF

PUZZLER PAGE SOLUTIONS

The puzzle page was not carried for the weeks of December 19 and December 26. So that our readers can check their answers we have listed below the solutions to the puzzle page carried on December 12 (No 251).

CROSSWORD

CRYPTIC: Across: 1 Marksmanship; 7 Train; 8 Chair; 9 Run; 10 Malinger; 11 Account; 12 Parade; 15 Martially; 17 Tea; 18 Nudge; 19 Tuber; 21 Considerable. Down: 1 Maltreatment; 2 Spa; 3 Annals; 4 Secondary; 5 Irate; 6 Cross-examine; 7 Tonic; 10 Manliness; 13 Aster; 14 Slated; 16 Radio; 20 Bar. QUICK: Across: 1 Confidential; 7 Allow; 8 Bear; 9 Tot; 10 Charlatan; 11 Recent; 12 Stream; 15 Adjourned; 17 Ass; 18 Drift; 19 Tacit; 21 Reprehension. Down: 1 Countermands; 2 Ill; 3 Enwrap; 4 Tabulated; 5 Avert; 6 Transmission; 7 Antic; 10 Conductor; 13 Exact; 14 Snatch; 16 Juice; 20 Can.

SUDOKU

8	2	6	3	5	7	4	9	1
3	1	4	8	9	6	2	7	
4	7	9	2	1	6	3	8	5
7	6	2	1	9	4	5	3	8
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9	3	8	7	5	2	1	4	
9	1	4	3	5	2	7	6	9
6	9	3	7	6	1	8	4	2
2	6	7	9	4	8	1	5	3

CODEWORD

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
N	D	Y	C	Z	F	E	O	P	M	B	A	Q
14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26
T	U	R	S	V	K	X	L	I	G	J	W	H

• For this week's puzzler turn to Page 31

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What's On!

SATURDAY'S TV 4.01.14

Listings supplied by Press Association

CHOICE



Catherine Tate

Catherine Tate's Nan

BBC1, 9.30pm
It's been a while since we saw Catherine Tate heading up her own series. Not that she hasn't been busy; in recent years she's had a stint as a Doctor Who companion, been a regular in the American version of The Office and starred alongside David Walliams in Big School. But now she's about to resurrect one of the comedy characters who helped to make her name – Joanie Taylor, better known as Nan. Her grandson Jamie is in Africa, so to lend her a hand she's got a new friend, Alice, who doesn't know what she's letting herself in for...

BBC1

6.00 Breakfast. **10.00** Saturday Kitchen Live. **11.30** Food & Drink. (R) **12.00** Football Focus. **12.45** Saturday Sportsday. **1.00** BBC News; Regional News; Weather. **1.15** Bargain Hunt. (R) **1.45** Escape to the Country. (R) **2.30** Live Darts: BDO World Championships. Coverage of the opening day of the tournament. **4.30** Final Score. **5.10** Frozen Planet. (R)
6.10 BBC News; Regional News; Weather.
6.30 **Celebrity Mastermind.** With Hal Crutenden, Clare Perkins, Sophie Hosking and Huw Stephens.
7.00 **Pointless Celebrities.** Featuring actors from Grange Hill, Waterloo Road and The Demon Headmaster.
7.50 **The National Lottery: Who Dares Wins.** New series. Nick Knowles hosts the game show in which two pairs of strangers compete by listing as much as they know about given subjects. Including the Lotto and Thunderball draws.
8.40 **Casualty.** Fletch witnesses an explosion at a bar and realises the man who accused him of assault is trapped inside the building.
9.30 **Catherine Tate's Nan.** The character returns in a one-off comedy special.
10.05 BBC News; Weather.
10.25 **Film: Little Fockers.** (2010) Premiere. Comedy sequel, starring Ben Stiller and Robert De Niro; National Lottery Update.
11.55 **Film: Romance & Cigarettes.** (2005) Musical drama, starring James Gandolfini.
1.35 Weatherview. **1.40** BBC News.

BBC2

6.05 **Film: My Fake Fiance.** (2009)
7.30 **Film: Stick It.** (2006) **9.10** Life on Earth. (R) **10.05** Life on Earth. (R) **11.00** Fred Dibnah's Made in Britain. (R) **11.30** Great British Railway Journeys. (R) **12.00** Paul Hollywood's Pies & Puds. (R) **12.45** Paul Hollywood's Pies & Puds. (R) **1.30** **Film: The Horse Whisperer.** (1998) **4.10** Coast. **4.30** Live Darts: BDO World Championships. Further coverage of the opening day of the tournament. **5.30** James May's Toy Stories. The Motorcycle Diary. Building a motorbike and sidecar entirely out of Meccano. (R)
6.30 **Flog It!** Valuing items in Malvern, Worcestershire. (R)
7.30 **Dad's Army.** Godfrey is accused of cowardice. (R)
8.00 **Morecambe & Wise: Leading Ladies.** Penelope Keith presents a compilation of highlights from the comedy duo's shows featuring appearances by female stars of stage and screen. (R)
9.00 **Dave Allen: God's Own Comedian.** A look at the life, career and legacy of the Irish comedy writer and performer, featuring interviews with family and friends and rare archive material. (R)
10.00 **Dave Allen: The Immaculate Selection.** Memorable routines by the comedian.
11.00 **Dave Allen in Search of the English Eccentric.** Documentary, first shown in 1974. (R)
11.55 **Darts: BDO World Championships.** Action from the opening day at the Lakeside Country Club.
12.45 Darts Extra. **2.45** This Is BBC Two.

ITV

6.00 CITV: Pat & Stan. **6.10** Pat & Stan. (R) **6.15** Pat & Stan. (R) **6.25** Dino Dan. (R) **6.40** Dino Dan. (R) **6.50** Canimals. (R) **6.55** Canimals. (R) **7.05** Canimals. (R) **7.15** Sooty. (R) **7.25** Sooty. (R) **7.40** Almost Naked Animals. (R) **7.50** Almost Naked Animals. (R) **8.05** Horrid Henry. (R) **8.15** Horrid Henry. (R) **8.30** Victorious. **9.00** Deadline Stories. (R) **9.25** ITV News. **9.30** Dinner Date. (R) **10.25** Murder, She Wrote. (R) **11.25** ITV News; Weather. **11.35** The Chase. (R) **12.40** Midsomer Murders. (R) **2.45** Show Me the Telly. (R) **3.45** You've Been Framed! Featuring golfing mishaps. (R) **4.15** Regional Programme: Weather. **4.30** ITV Football. Arsenal v Tottenham Hotspur (Kick-off 5.15pm). Coverage of the third-round encounter at the Emirates Stadium, as the north London rivals meet in an eye-catching tie.
7.20 **Splash!** New series. Vernon Kay, Gabby Logan and Tom Daley return with the celebrity diving contest.
8.50 **Take Me Out.** New series. An IT consultant, an entrepreneur, a daredevil and a student take part.
9.50 **The Jonathan Ross Show.** New series. The host subjects another batch of celebrity guests to no-holds-barred questioning.
10.50 ITV News; Weather.
11.05 **FA Cup Football Highlights.** Action from the third round, with fixtures including Arsenal v Tottenham Hotspur, Wigan Athletic v Milton Keynes Dons and Macclesfield Town v Sheffield Wednesday.
12.35 Jackpot247. **3.00** Ladette to Lady: Australia. (R) **3.45** ITV Nightscreen.

CHANNEL 4

6.00 The Treacle People. (R) **6.10** Little Wolf's Book of Badness. (R) **6.35** **Film: Arctic Tale.** (2007) **8.00** The Morning Line. **9.00** The American Football Show. **10.00** How I Met Your Mother. (R) **10.30** How I Met Your Mother. (R) **11.00** The Big Bang Theory. (R) **11.30** The Big Bang Theory. (R) **12.00** The Simpsons. (R) **12.30** Jamie's Festive Feast. (R) **1.30** Channel 4 Racing. **4.00** Come Dine with Me. (R) **4.30** Come Dine with Me. (R) **5.00** Come Dine with Me. (R) **5.35** Come Dine with Me. (R)
6.05 **Come Dine with Me.** Jane Welch hosts the final dinner party in west London. (R)
6.35 **Channel 4 News.**
7.00 **Speed with Guy Martin.** The motorcycle racer takes part in four adrenaline-fuelled challenges, beginning with an attempt to break the British record for outright speed on a bicycle. (R)
8.00 **New Secrets of the Terracotta Warriors – Secret History.** Recent discoveries about China's Terracotta Army, an extraordinary collection of ceramic sculptures unearthed in 1974 and dating back more than 2,000 years. (R)
9.00 **Film: Robin Hood.** (2010) An archer returning from the crusades faces a plot by a traitorous knight to aid a French conquest of England. Adventure, with Russell Crowe and Kate Blanchett.
11.45 **Charlie Brooker's How Videogames Changed the World.** The broadcaster delves into the history of the games industry. (R)
1.40 Fresh Meat. (R) **2.25** Holyoaks. (R) **4.30** Suburgatory. **4.50** 90210. **5.35** Deal or No Deal. (R)

CHANNEL 5

6.00 Milkshake! **10.00** Power Rangers: Megaforce. **10.35** Sluggterra. **11.00** Jungle Babies: Tarsier Tails. (R) **11.30** Celebrity Big Brother: Live Launch. (R) **1.25** **Film: Columbo: Try and Catch Me.** (1977) **3.00** **Film: Columbo: A Case of Impunity.** (1975) **4.25** Diagnosis Murder. (R) **5.25** Diagnosis Murder. (R)
6.20 **Mr & Mrs Murder.** New series. Australian detective comedy, starring Shaun Micallef and Kat Stewart.
7.10 **CSI: Crime Scene Investigation.** Two siblings confess to a schoolgirl's murder. (R)
8.00 **NCIS.** The team tries to prove Ziva had nothing to do with a political assassination carried out by her former Mossad partner – but has to tackle the case without Gibbs's guidance. (R)
9.00 **NCIS.** Against his better judgement, Gibbs comes out of retirement to help Fornell and his daughter by reopening the case of an escaped convict who is putting their lives in danger. (R)
9.55 **5 News Weekend.**
10.00 **Celebrity Big Brother.** Highlights of the famous housemates' past 24 hours.
11.00 **Celebrity Big Brother's Bit on the Psych.** New series. Psychological analysis of the housemates' behaviour.
12.00 SuperCasino. **3.05** True CSI. (R) **4.00** Wildlife SOS. (R) **4.25** Make It Big. (R) **4.50** Roary the Racing Car. (R) **5.00** Angels of Jarm. (R) **5.10** Hana's Helpline. (R) **5.20** Angels of Jarm. (R) **5.25** The Funky Valley Show. (R) **5.40** Roary the Racing Car. (R) **5.50** Hana's Helpline. (R)

DIGITAL

BBC Three
7.00 Doctor Who: The Ultimate Guide. **8.00** Top Gear. **9.00** **Film: Die Hard with a Vengeance** (1995)
11.00 Family Guy
BBC Four
7.00 Nasa – Triumph and Tragedy
8.00 A Very British Murder with Lucy Worsley
9.00 The Bridge
11.00 Rock 'n' Roll Britannia
ITV2
3.20 **Film: Junior** (1994) **5.30** **Film: Beethoven's 2nd** (1993) **7.15** **Film: Mr Bean's Holiday** (2007) **9.00** **Film: The 40 Year Old Virgin** (2005) **11.20** **Film: Bridget Jones: The Edge of Reason** (2004)
ITV3
2.50 Housewife, 49 **4.40** Agatha Christie's Marple **6.50** Agatha Christie's Poirot **11.00** Prime Suspect
ITV4
3.10 **Film: Shootout** (1971) **5.05** **Film: The War Wagon** (1967) **7.10** Storage Wars **8.10** **Film: Police Academy 6: City Under Siege** (1989) **10.00** **Film: Lethal Weapon 2** (1989)
E4
4.25 **Film: Penelope** (2006) **6.10** **Film: Meet Dave** (2008) **8.00** The Big Bang Theory **9.00** **Film: The Waterboy** (1998) **10.50** The Inbetweeners **11.55** 8 Out of 10 Cats
Film4
2.55 Baby's Day Out (1994) **4.45** Gambit (1966) **6.55** Employee of the Month (2006) Comedy, with Dane Cook, Dax Shepard and Jessica Simpson. **9.00** Easy A (2010) A teenage girl lies about her non-existent sexual history, and uses the resulting rumours to become the talk of the school. Teen comedy, with Emma Stone and Penn Badgley. **10.50** Troll Hunter (2010)

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What's On!

Listings supplied by Press Association

SUNDAY'S TV 5.01.14

CHOICE



Dan Snow

Operation Grand Canyon with Dan Snow
BBC2, 9pm

For some Karl Pilkington types who might not embrace the glory of nature, the Grand Canyon is just a big rocky hole in the ground. For others it is one of the wonders of the world. Given that camera crews from around the globe spend a chunk of each year filming it, there's little wonder we are occasionally treated to another HD-friendly documentary like this. Here, occasional One Show reporter Dan Snow joins forces with a team of scientists and historians to emulate explorer John Wesley Powell's 1869 expedition.

BBC1

6.00 Breakfast. **9.00** The Andrew Marr Show. **10.00** The Big Questions. **11.00** Homes Under the Hammer. (R) **12.00** Bargain Hunt. **1.00** BBC News: Weather. **1.15** Moving On. (R) **2.00** Escape to the Country. (R) **2.45** Helicopter Heroes. **3.15** That Puppet Game Show. **4.00** Songs of Praise. **4.35** Dolphins - Spy in the Pod. (R) **5.35** BBC News: Regional News; Weather.

6.00 Countryfile. John Craven joins the staff of Killerton House in Devon as they prepare for the year ahead. He also views the home's antique clothing collection and presents items from past shows.

7.00 Celebrity Mastermind. With Fred MacAulay, Mark Billingham, Georgia Henshaw and Charles Collingwood.

7.30 Antiques Roadshow. The experts gather at the home of the Royal Ballet School in Richmond Park, London. Objects include a longbow used in the Second World War and a sketch of Dylan Thomas's wife.

8.30 Sherlock. The brooding detective is kept busy as best man on John and Mary's wedding day - but it soon turns out his duties involve stopping a killer who is stalking the reception.

10.00 BBC News: Regional News; Weather.

10.25 Mrs Brown's Boys New Year Special. The dotting mother gets a new house guest - a homeless parrot. (R)

11.05 Film: Good Will Hunting. (1997) Drama, with Matt Damon.

1.05 Weatherview. **1.10** BBC News.

BBC2

6.00 This Is BBC Two. **6.10** Film: Odette. (1950) **8.05** Monty Don's French Gardens. (R) **9.05** Countryfile. (R) **10.00** Saturday Kitchen Best Bites. **11.30** Paul Hollywood's Pies & Puds. (R) **12.15** Paul Hollywood's Pies & Puds. (R) **1.00** Live Darts: BDO World Championships. Coverage of the second day of the tournament. **5.00** Ski Sunday. **5.45** Film: Catch Me If You Can. (2002) Fact-based drama, starring Leonardo DiCaprio and Tom Hanks.

8.00 Nature's Weirdest Events. Chris Packham investigates reports of bears turning to a life of crime and fish that have contrived a way to attack birds on land. Last in the series.

9.00 Operation Grand Canyon with Dan Snow. The presenter joins a team of historians and geologists to recreate the pioneering 280-mile journey undertaken around the natural wonder by explorer John Wesley Powell in 1869.

10.00 Charlie Brooker's 2013 Wipe. A satirical look back at the events of the past 12 months, which included the horse-meat scandal, the death of Margaret Thatcher and the US government shutdown. (R)

11.00 Darts: BDO World Championships. Action from the second day at the Lakeside Country Club in Frimley Green, featuring first-round matches in the men's and ladies' competitions.

11.50 Darts Extra. The BDO World Championships.

1.50 Sign Zone: Countryfile. (R) **2.45** Holby City. (R) **3.45** This Is BBC Two.

ITV

6.00 CITV: Pat & Stan. **6.10** Pat & Stan. (R) **6.15** Pat & Stan. (R) **6.25** Dino Dan. (R) **6.40** Dino Dan. (R) **6.50** Animals. (R) **6.55** Animals. (R) **7.05** Animals. (R) **7.15** Sooty. (R) **7.25** Sooty. (R) **7.40** Almost Naked Animals. (R) **7.50** Almost Naked Animals. (R) **8.05** Horrid Henry. (R) **8.15** Horrid Henry. (R) **8.30** Victorious. **9.00** Deadline Stories. (R) **9.25** FA Cup Football Highlights. (R) **10.55** The Unforgettable Leonard Rossiter. (R) **11.25** ITV News: Weather.

11.30 Live FA Cup Football. Nottingham Forest v West Ham United (Kick-off 12.00pm). **2.15** The Cube. (R) **3.15** Splash! (R)

4.45 The Celebrity Chase. With Sally Lindsay, Shaun Williamson, Barry McGuigan and Jenny Frost. (R) **5.45** Regional Programme; Weather.

6.00 ITV News: Weather.

6.15 Dancing on Ice. New series. Past contestants get their skates back on for the final series.

7.45 All Star Family Fortunes. With Kimberley Walsh and Wayne Sleep.

8.30 Dancing on Ice: The Skate Off. New series. A double elimination.

9.00 All New I'll Be Alright on the Night. TV bloopers, with Griff Rhys Jones.

10.00 ITV News at Ten: Weather.

10.15 Birds of a Feather. ITV's revival of the hit BBC sitcom. (R)

10.45 FA Cup Football Highlights. Action from today's third-round matches.

11.45 Premiership Rugby Union. Action from the 12th round of top-flight fixtures.

12.40 The Store. **2.40** The Jeremy Kyle Show USA. **4.05** Nightscreen. **5.05** The Jeremy Kyle Show. (R)

CHANNEL 4

6.30 Film: Barnyard. (2006) **8.00** Everybody Loves Raymond. (R) **8.30** Frasier. (R) **9.00** Frasier. (R) **9.30** Sunday Brunch. **12.30** How I Met Your Mother. (R) **1.00** How I Met Your Mother. (R) **1.30** The Big Bang Theory. (R) **2.00** The Big Bang Theory. (R) **2.30** The Simpsons. (R) **3.00** The Simpsons. (R) **3.30** Film: Edward Scissorhands. (1990) Tim Burton's fantasy, starring Johnny Depp.

5.35 Channel 4 News.

6.05 Deal or No Deal. High-stakes game show, with Noel Edmonds.

7.00 Shipping Wars. Documentary following delivery firms that cater for the eBay generation, picking up and dropping off a wide range of complicated, seemingly un-shippable loads.

8.00 Speed with Guy Martin. For his second adrenaline-fuelled challenge, the racer tries to set the world record for riding a motorcycle on water, with the help of a Cambridge professor and marine engineers.

9.00 Film: Bad Teacher. (2011) Premiere. A cynical, hard-drinking teacher hopes to seduce a wealthy substitute, making an enemy of a squeaky-clean colleague.

10.50 Rude Tube: Welcome to 2014. Alex Zane welcomes in the New Year with 100 internet clips. (R)

12.55 Film: Waltz with Bashir. (2008) Drama, directed by Ari Folman. **2.30** Coming Up. (R) **3.00** How Not to Get Old. (R) **3.55** Phil Spencer: Secret Agent. (R) **4.50** Deal or No Deal. (R) **5.45** Baking Mad with Eric Lanlard. (R)

CHANNEL 5

6.00 Milkshake!: Peppa Pig. **6.05** Roxy the Racing Car. (R) **6.15** Frida and the Flowerbuds. (R) **6.25** Bubble Guppies. (R) **6.40** The Mr Men Show. (R) **6.50** Chloe's Closet. (R) **7.05** Roxy the Racing Car. (R) **7.10** Bananas in Pyjamas. (R) **7.25** Make Way for Noddy. (R) **7.35** Toby's Travelling Circus. (R) **7.45** City of Friends. (R) **8.00** Little Princess. (R) **8.10** The Adventures of Bottle Top Bill and His Best Friend Corky. (R) **8.25** Angelina Ballerina. (R) **8.40** Rupert Bear. (R) **8.55** Ben and Holly's Little Kingdom. (R) **9.10** Jelly Jamm. (R) **9.30** LazyTown. (R) **10.00** Power Rangers: Super Samurai. (R) **10.35** Sluggert. **11.00** Jungle Babies: Tarsier Tails. (R) **11.30** Celebrity Big Brother. (R) **12.30** Cowboy Builders. (R) **1.30** Film: Grounded. (2006) **3.15** Film: Along Came Polly. (2004) **4.55** Film: Made of Honor. (2008)

6.40 Film: Miss Congeniality 2: Armed and Fabulous. (2005) Comedy sequel, starring Sandra Bullock, Regina King and William Shatner. Edited for violence.

8.55 5 News Weekend.

9.00 Celebrity Big Brother. The ups and downs of life in the BB house as friendships and alliances are made, battle lines are drawn and arguments erupt.

10.00 Most Shocking Celebrity Moments 2013. Countdown of the biggest showbusiness stories and scandals of the year. (R)

12.55 SuperCasino. **3.05** True CSI. **4.00** Wildlife SOS. (R) **4.20** Make It Big. (R) **4.50** Roxy the Racing Car. (R) **5.00** Angels of Jarm. (R) **5.05** Hana's Helpline. (R) **5.20** Angels of Jarm. (R) **5.25** The Funky Valley Show. (R) **5.40** Roxy the Racing Car. (R) **5.50** Hana's Helpline. (R)

DIGITAL

BBC Three
7.00 The Gruffalo. **7.30** The Gruffalo's Child. **7.55** Film: 101 Dalmatians. (1996) **9.30** Russell Howard's Good News. **10.00** Film: Starship Troopers. (1997)

BBC Four
7.00 Britain by Bike. **7.30** The Return of Colmille. **8.30** Apples, Pears and Paint: How to Make a Still Life Painting. **10.00** Nigel Slater's Great British Biscuit. **11.00** Film: Elena. (2011)

ITV2

2.00 Film: The Mighty Ducks (1992) **4.10** Film: Scooby-Doo 2: Monsters Unleashed (2004) **6.05** Film: Evan Almighty (2007) **8.00** You've Been Framed! **9.00** The Magulaf Weekender. **10.00** I Am Britney Jean: Britney Spears' Road to Las Vegas. **11.50** Film: Forgetting Sarah Marshall (2008)

ITV3

3.15 Agatha Christie's Poirot. **9.00** Film: Changeling (2008) Fact-based drama, starring Angelina Jolie. **11.50** Cracker

ITV4

3.05 Film: Shalako (1968) **5.20** Film: The Battle of Midway (1976) **8.00** Premiership Rugby Union. **9.00** Film: Universal Soldier: Regeneration (2005) **11.00** Film: The Matrix Reloaded (2003)

E4

3.50 Rude(ish) Tube. **4.45** Film: Grease (1978) **7.00** The Big Bang Theory. **8.00** Film: Home Alone 2: Lost in New York (1992) **10.20** The Inbetweeners. **11.30** 8 Out of 10 Cats

Film4

2.55 The Rugrats Movie (1999) **4.30** The Golden Compass (2007) **6.40** Crocodile Dundee II (1988) **8.50** 12 Years a Slave Interview Special. **9.00** The Mechanic (2011) **10.50** 48 Hrs (1982)

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What's On!

Film Choices

Monday

Hellboy II: The Golden Army, ITV, 11.20pm
The demon superhero, aided by a team from the Bureau of Paranormal Research and Defence, leads the fight against renegade elf Prince Nuada who is intent on reawakening an unstoppable robot army. Action fantasy sequel directed by Guillermo del Toro, starring Ron Perlman and Selma Blair. (2008)

Tuesday

Insomnia, BBC1, 11.15pm
A detective is sent to Alaska to investigate a murder during a month when the sun does not set. Sleep deprivation starts to take its toll, and he accidentally shoots his partner dead. He tries to cover it up, but the criminal they were hunting has seen everything and blackmails the cop into helping him escape justice. Thriller directed by Christopher Nolan, starring Al Pacino, Robin Williams and Hilary Swank. (2002)

Wednesday

Mimic, BBC1, 11.50pm
A scientist is shocked to discover a species of cockroach-hunting bug she created years earlier to eradicate a disease has evolved into the perfect killing machine. Horror from director Guillermo del Toro, starring Mira Sorvino, Jeremy Northam, Charles S Dutton and Alexander Goodwin. (1997)



Saw, Friday, Channel 4, 11.25pm

Thursday

Stolen Innocence, Channel 5, 3.15pm
A woman is rushed to hospital after giving birth to a still-born girl, only to be accused by the police of murdering the child. Demanding to see the midwife who was treating her at home, she discovers the woman was an imposter and is certain her baby has been kidnapped. Thriller, starring Gina Philips and Ellie Harvie. (2007)

Friday

Saw, Channel 4, 11.25pm
Detectives hunt a killer who kidnaps his victims and forces them to play sadistic games with life-or-death consequences. Meanwhile, two strangers wake to find themselves chained to pipes in a filthy, derelict bathroom – and at the mercy of the madman. Horror, written by and starring Leigh Whannell, alongside Cary Elwes, Danny Glover and Dina Meyer. (2004)

The Majestic, ITV, 3am

A screenwriter in 1950s America becomes disillusioned with Hollywood when he falls victim to the communist witch-hunts of the era, and heads out for a drive – but a car crash leaves him suffering from amnesia and stranded in a small town, where he's mistakenly identified as a Second World War hero. Frank Darabont's drama, starring Jim Carrey. (2001)

Pick of the Week

Fighting to become the champion of champions

If something's going to end, it may as well go out with a bang, right? Clearly those in charge of **Dancing on Ice, ITV, Sunday, 6.15pm** think that, because this, the last-ever series of the celebrity talent show, will feature the good, the bad and the ugly from the previous eight runs.

So appearing alongside genuinely talented skaters such as reigning champ Beth Tweddle, Ray Quinn, Kyran Bracken, Suzanne Shaw and Sam Attwater will be Joe Pasquale and Todd Carly. Neither of them were voted out first during their series, but they were memorable for perhaps the wrong reasons – Todd Carly in particular.

Co-host Phillip Schofield has suggested that because everyone taking part already has some skating experience, we should see a higher standard this time.

"Human ability means that in past years, some people will concentrate, work harder and get better by the time they get to the series.

"Even if you didn't want it to be that way, there will be someone who will be head and shoulders above the

rest, and you think, does that mean we already have a winner? And that's not always the case, obviously, but with something like this, everyone can already skate."

Hmmm... maybe he's forgotten Carly's spectacular time on the ice – or perhaps he knows something about the former EastEnder that we don't...

Schofield also can't wait to see the professionals in action again too. "I'm often frustrated because you get to see a professional skater, maybe on a commercial break, or a show that they do that's not Dancing on Ice, and you look at the unbelievable ability that they have," he says.

"Then they come on our show, and for the first six weeks, they're pushing somebody around the ice who can't skate, and you never get to see really what they can do. So that might be something new this series, we get to know how good our professionals are a little bit more."

Although you might think that most of the nerves rest with the competitors, Schofield admits that there's a lot of pressure on him and Christine Bleakley to get things right too.

"It's the sort of show you don't want to muck up. I just don't like making mistakes, I never have."

"You want to get it right because as a presenter, you want to seamlessly get people from one place to another without your performance being the thing that distracted them – unless it's something you wanted to distract them with."

Quinn has already been installed as the bookies' favourite to lift the champion of champions trophy, but the aforementioned group of ex-series winners, as well as Bonnie Langford, Zarah Abrahams, Jorgie Porter, David Seaman, Gareth Gates and Gary Lucy, might have something to say about that.

And who will face the disappointment of leaving the show first – something they would probably all prefer to avoid?

At least nobody will have long to wait to find out; the results show is broadcast later in the evening at 8.30pm, when the lowest-scoring celebrities perform crowd-pleasing routines from their original series in a battle for survival.



Phillip Schofield and Christine Bleakley host Dancing on Ice, ITV, 6.15pm

Best of the Rest

Monday

The Bletchley Circle, ITV, 9pm

Anna Maxwell Martin, Rachael Stirling, Sophie Rundle and Julie Graham make a welcome return as the code-breakers-trained-detectives, whose rather homespun yet brain-busting approach to catching criminals makes a welcome change to the cerebral cops and forensic experts were used to seeing. Here, their Bletchley Park links come to the fore again when they help former colleague Alice Merren, who's been accused of murdering her former lover, John Richards, after being found standing over his corpse with a smoking gun in her hand. The outcome looks pretty bleak for Alice, until her friends learn that Richards had another woman in his life.

Tuesday

The Taste, Channel 4, 9pm

Okay so television isn't crying out for another cooking competition – we're hardly in short supply, after all. However, given the names attached to this latest effort, it might be worth a shot. Multi award-winning food writer Nigella Lawson is back on telly for the right reasons, and she is joined by critically acclaimed chef Ludo Lefebvre and food maverick Anthony Bourdain in her search to find the best chef who can impress with a single spoonful of food. First thing's first, and the mentors sample the cooking of 25 hopefuls, who range from amateurs to professionals from some of Britain's best restaurants – and with that one spoonful of food, they're fighting for a place on the show.

Wednesday, Waterloo Road, BBC1, 8.30pm

The locals had better watch out as there's a new girl on site, and while she leaves some pupils wide-eyed, she also creates a few problems for the long suffering staff. Gabriella Wark (Naomi Batrick, a veteran of Doctors and recent movie Blood) may be smart, sassy and stunning, but her disruptive behaviour has already led to her being expelled from several schools. And now she has her sights firmly set on attractive new PE teacher Hector (Leon Ockenden), she's clearly not about to become a shy and retiring student just yet. Meanwhile, newlywed Simon (Richard Mylan) kicks off his new Resilience Education scheme, and incurs the wrath of Christine (Laurie Brett).

Thursday, Birds of a Feather, ITV, 8.30pm

Cheerful Cockney molls Sharon (Pauline Quirke) and Tracey (Linda Robson) are back to wring more laughs from Laurence Marks and Maurice Gran's winning formula, this time with the aid of fellow writers Gary Lawson and John Phelps. Sharon now works for Dorian (Lesley Joseph) full-time, while Tracey, as sole breadwinner, is left to pay all the household bills. Dorian offers to dip into her savings for some rent, but gets a rude awakening when

she contacts the bank and discovers all her finances are being used for legal fees. A desperate Sharon and Tracey take Dorien to a car boot sale to raise some much-needed funds, but how much will they get for her beloved designer collection?

Benidorm, ITV, 9pm

Fresh from his guest appearance in The Spa's festive special, ex-Brookside star Philip Olivier pops up here as Jason Gallagher, who turns up at The Solano in the hope of landing a job. Seeing as he's easy on the eye, Joyce offers him a job – which leaves Mateo fuming. Can there really be room for two handsome hunks behind the bar? Mateo might be pleased about receiving a helping hand when Tiger and Michael's get-rich-quick scheme leads to mayhem at the venue, while Clive's mind is preoccupied with his daughter Bianca, who's been seen wandering through Alicante airport in trousers.

Friday, Piers Morgan's Life Stories: Mary Berry, ITV, 9pm

Mary Berry can certainly hold her own in the Great British Bake Off kitchen, but we're about to see how she fares under

harsh studio spotlights and on the receiving end of a good Piers Morgan grilling. The 78-year-old food writer and TV presenter is the latest familiar face to sit in the hot seat and take a detailed look back through her life and career. As she opens up to Piers, Mary will be discussing her family life (and talks discipline methods used when her children were growing up), her role in the much-adored Bake Off series, and cooking cow udder pie for her first TV appearance more than 40 years ago.

Italy Unpacked, BBC2, 9pm

Christmas, and all the guilty indulgences that come with it, is over for another year, and our thoughts are finally turning to our summer holiday, so Andrew Graham-Dixon and chef Giorgio Locatelli are embarking on another jaunt around beautiful Italy. They're beginning in Liguria, where the rocky mountains and rugged coastline once inspired English poets of the Romantic era. The pair also visit Genoa before heading on to Cinque Terre (meaning 'five lands') where they hop on a boat to explore the scattered villages. Next up, it's on to Tuscany, before they conclude this leg of the trip with a look around Pistoia, Pisa and Livorno.

The Graham Norton Show, BBC1, 10.35pm

Graham is joined by a quartet of movie stars tonight, headed up by Hollywood heavyweights Robert De Niro and Sylvester Stallone, who talk about their new boxing film Grudge Match. Comic actor Jonah Hill shares his experiences of working with Martin Scorsese on The Wolf of Wall Street.



The Bletchley Circle, Monday, ITV, 9pm

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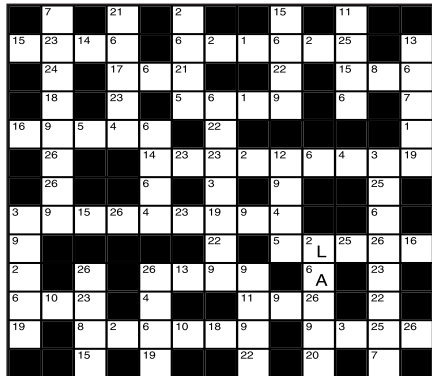
Puzzler

Brain Gym

No.254

Codeword

Each number in the grid represents a different letter of the alphabet and every letter of the alphabet is used. Use the given letter(s) to the right of the main grid to start you off.



1	14
2	15
3	16
4	17
5	18
6	19
7	20
8	21
9	22
10	23
11	24
12	25
13	26

LAST WEEK'S SOLUTION:

N	O	H	F	G	D	I	K	C	V	M	L	S
W	B	A	Q	E	X	Z	J	T	Y	P	R	U

Double Crossword

Choose either quick or cryptic clues - both fit the same grid.

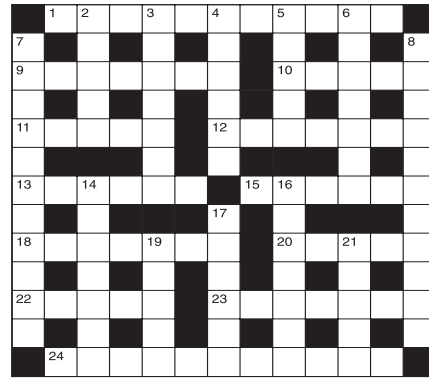
Cryptic Clues:

Across

1. Skilled craftsmen? (11)
9. Game, and how to score in it (7)
10. People act foolishly in it (5)
11. Stone used to make an attack (5)
12. Birds I hide in a ship (7)
13. Attacked and bombed perhaps (6)
15. A colourless individual (6)
18. Take pains to produce inconvenience (7)
20. Vessel carrying fuel from Loire (5)
22. All right, a sanctimonious creature (5)
23. Terminated the sitting, presumably (5,2)
24. Discerning writer and french sailor (11)

Down

2. Dislikes haste, perhaps (5)
3. Money from pirates (7)
4. Enjoy a flavour (6)
5. Presents one's natural talents (5)
6. Ends of routes vary in merit (7)
7. News being made? (11)
8. It records world-shaking events (11)
14. Rich fabric with an outstanding design (7)
16. The prospect for a guardsman (4-3)
17. Woolworker is something of a problem (6)
19. She's a new member of a union (5)
21. Like a ship taking a number to port (5)



Quick Clues:

Across

1. Inconsiderate (11)
9. Dark cell (7)
10. Combine (5)
11. Deposit (5)
12. Paid up (7)
13. Strain (6)
15. Motive (6)
18. Envelop (7)
20. Come in (5)
22. Felony (5)
23. Odd (7)
24. Stocks and shares (11)

Down

2. Sharpened (5)
3. Unavailing (7)
4. Upright (6)
5. Confine (5)
6. Ambles (7)
7. Immaturity (11)
8. Starring part (7,4)
14. Disturbance (7)
16. Put to death (7)
17. Issue (6)
19. Corrupt (5)
21. Reliance (5)

Sudoku

3	9	7		4				
	2	6		9	5	8		
7		5	1				6	
	1		3					9
6			4	6	5			
1				3		9		
5			9	4	2	1		
	4			6	5			

Fill in the grid below so that every column, every row and each of the 3x3 boxes contains all the digits from 1 to 9.

LAST WEEK'S SOLUTIONS >

9	7	5	3	1	6	2	4
2	3	9	6	5	4	7	8
6	4	1	2	7	8	9	5
1	9	7	4	2	3	5	6
4	5	2	8	6	9	1	3
3	8	6	5	1	7	4	9
9	1	8	7	3	6	2	4
5	6	4	1	8	2	3	7
7	2	3	9	4	5	8	1

LAST WEEK'S CROSSWORD SOLUTIONS:
Across: 1 Penelope; 5 Spar; 9 Tsar; 10 Distinct; 11 Cache; 12 Illcit; 13 Dentist's chair; 18 Sea-fover; 19 Toss; 20 Animate; 21 Chair; 22 Night; 23 Skittles. Down: 2 Enslave; 3 Earshot; 4 Pain in the neck; 6 Panacea; 7 Rotator; 8 Italic; 13 Disdain; 14 Nearing; 15 Ice-man; 16 Hatchet; 17 Inspire. QUICK - Across: 1 Contempt; 5 Serf; 9 Alias; 10 Contract; 11 Equal; 12 Imitate; 13 Defectiveness; 18 Ceremony; 19 Eddy; 20 Initial; 21 Offer; 22 Ever; 23 Eyeglass. Down: 2 Oblique; 3 Testate; 4 Provisionally; 6 Emanate; 7 Fitness; 8 Strife; 13 Decline; 14 Furtive; 15 Commit; 16 Needful; 17 Sadness.



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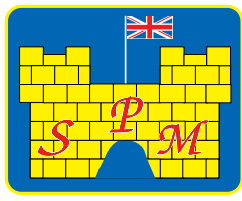
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HOME & GARDEN

Russian roof inspiration and a winter way to dry

IN RUSSIA Christmas arrives on January 7 and Russians celebrate on that day because it is Christ's birthday according to the Gregorian calendar, as recognised by the Russian Orthodox Church.

During the Soviet era Christmas was officially discouraged but since the fall of Communism it has again become a major event and a national holiday since 1992.

Range

Russia has inspired a new range of colourful kitchenalia from Lakeland, called Russian Rooftops, including the impressive **Russian Rooftops Cake Stand (£8.99)** made out of sturdy card.

The range also includes a cotton apron (£15.99), machine washable double oven glove (£11.99), machine washable tea cosy (£15.99) and pack of 60 cupcake cases (£3.49).

Leaving your washing to dry outside at this time of year could result in frozen or persistently damp clothes, and the tumble drier alternative is costly in energy.

Lakeland has an option for busy households looking for another solution with its exclusive **Dry-Soon 3-Tier Tower Aired (£92.99)**.



The Russian Rooftop Cake Stand, part of a new range of colourful kitchenalia



Get the washing dry the easy way this winter with the Dry-Soon 3-Tier Tower Aired

Come rain or shine, this electric-powered airer gets clothes drier quicker.

It costs less than 5p an hour to run and has 21m worth of drying space, or can open to half the size for smaller loads.

It has flat drying surfaces too for delicates and wool-

ens and, despite reaching a height of 54 inches (135cms), is light to handle and can fold to a depth of just three inches (under 8cms).

Great for towels and duvets, this drier means you will no longer have to muffle your radiators during the winter.

See the lakeland.co.uk website, call 015394 88100 or visit one of their shops, which includes branches at the Gracechurch Centre in Sutton Coldfield, Touchwood at Solihull, Shrewsbury and Worcester.

LB

No time to put feet up when soil needs tending



This is the time of year to prepare your fruit and veg patch for the coming growing season

JANUARY may be a quiet time of year in the fruit and vegetable garden, but you can't completely put your feet up and forget about it.

Soil pH (acidity/alkalinity) is one factor that gardeners should know about their soil, as it will determine which plants can be grown successfully.

And yet, there are so many gardeners that don't have a clue about their soil's pH.

So, now's a good time to test it. Soil pH testing kits come in numerous forms and are inexpensive to buy.

While you're testing for pH, go the

whole hog and test the nitrogen, phosphorus and potash levels too.

Having this knowledge may well solve one of those long-term nagging questions about why your plants have been struggling to grow.

Topical tip: Keep clearing away crops as they go over or are harvested. Keeping the veg garden clean and tidy is one way to reduce pest and disease problems later in the year.

Fruit

In cold regions, you may need to provide winter protection for wall-trained figs to help the young figs overwinter to produce next year's crop. Cover with plastic netting and flip between the plant and the netting with

straw, bracken or other open material. This covering should remain on until the danger of frost has passed.

Free-standing and container-grown figs can be covered with horticultural fleece when cold weather and frost is forecast.

Clean up old strawberry beds, removing yellow foliage, old runners and any plants that look as if they are affected by viruses.

Lift and pot up or plant out rooted strawberry runners. These will make new plants to fruit for the next five to six years and are useful replacements for old or diseased plants.

Topical tip: Keep planting new fruit trees, bushes and canes. This is a great time of year to restock the fruit garden.

Motoring

Compiled by Motoring
Editor Sharon Walters

Nissan's latest Qashqai redefining crossover

COMBINING innovation and exciting technology with intelligent design, the new Qashqai will build on the success of its two-million selling predecessor.

Yet despite setting new standards for technology, comfort and practicality, the Qashqai remains accessible to buyers considering a conventional hatchback or crossover. With prices starting from just £17,595, buyers can benefit from premium quality and some of the most advanced features on the market.

Nissan's philosophy of bringing premium features to the family car market is tried and tested. The exceptional success of the original model proves that buyers now expect Nissan to deliver sector-first innovations and fresh thinking in every key area.

The new Qashqai, on sale this month, is available in four familiar grades: Visia, Acenta, Acenta Premium and Tekna.

Visia models, priced from £17,595, come with a range of new features including automatic air conditioning, hill start assist, a five-inch colour HD infotainment screen, chassis control, TPMS (tyre pressure monitoring system) and speed limiter/cruise control all fitted as standard.

Acenta models continue the generous theme with a further list of premium features fitted as standard.

Priced from £19,145, these include dual-zone automatic air conditioning, premium leather steering wheel and gear knob, 17-inch alloy wheels and a luggage board system. Safety equipment includes front fog lamps, auto headlamps and rain-sensing wipers.

Both the Visia and Acenta models come with the option of a smart vision pack (£450) that adds Nissan's advanced safety shield system among other driver aids. Designed to enhance the safety of occupants, the pack incorporates front collision avoidance and traffic sign recognition.

Acenta Premium models start from £20,995 and feature a raft of comfort and safety technologies. These include new-generation NissanConnect infotainment system with DAB radio. A rear view camera is also fitted as standard, along with i-key start push button, parking sensors and a panoramic glass roof. Safety features include front collision avoidance, high beam assist and lane departure warning.

Technologies

Range-topping Tekna models – which start from £23,145 – feature an array of new-to-sector technologies that further highlight Nissan's lead in the crossover market. For safety, Tekna models benefit from Bi-LED headlamps, Safety Shield with Traffic Sign Recognition and High Beam Assist.

Tekna models also excel when it comes to design and technology features. All models are equipped with 19-inch alloy wheels, roof rails, part-leather seats, a large glass roof, heated seats, front and rear parking sensors and Intelligent key with engine start button.

The latest-generation NissanConnect system is also standard, including a seven-inch touchscreen display, DAB digital radio, Around View Monitor and smartphone connectivity.

A range of supremely efficient and refined petrol and diesel engines allows the new Qashqai to exceed the expectations of drivers

no matter which powertrain is chosen. The line-up consists of four engines: two petrol and two diesel, with the option of two- or four-wheel-drive. Customers can also choose between manual and all-new Xtronic automatic transmissions.

Driving through a six-speed manual transmission, the entry-level 1.2 DIG-T delivers 115PS and generates 190Nm of torque. Despite its modest size, the 1.2-litre engine packs a real punch, offering sharper acceleration and greater flexibility than the outgoing 1.6-litre naturally aspirated engine.

Its lower weight and more fuel-efficient operation also mean it is considerably cleaner and more economical than the model it replaces. The 1.2 DIG-T engine emits 129g/km of CO (15g/km less than the outgoing 1.6-litre petrol unit), and has a fuel consumption figure of 50.4mpg.

Like all engines in the new Qashqai range, the 1.2 DIG-T is equipped with start/stop ignition as standard.

Set to join the Qashqai range in autumn 2014, the most powerful petrol engine will be the 1.6 DIG-T engine with 150PS.

With 240Nm of torque on offer, the 1.6 DIG-T delivers impressive low and mid-range pull, with excellent in-gear flexibility. Yet despite its strong performance, the range-topping petrol option retains impressive efficiency. Fuel consumption is 50.4mpg on the EU combined cycle, while CO emissions are 132g/km.

The latest evolution of the award-winning 1.5 dCi 110PS direct injection diesel engine is the cleanest and most fuel-efficient engine ever offered in a Qashqai with CO emissions of just 99g/km and an EU combined fuel consumption figure of just 74.3mpg.

The sixth-generation 1.5-litre dCi unit is smoother, more efficient and more refined than the outgoing engine. Thanks to a substantial re-engineering programme, the 1.5-litre dCi engine offers greater in-gear flexibility thanks to a 20Nm increase in torque.

Advanced

Positioned at the top of the Qashqai's diesel range, the 1.6 dCi 130PS is offered with the option of two- and four-wheel-drive. This unit is one of the most advanced diesel powerplants in its sector, with a number of technical innovations designed to maximise fuel consumption and reduce CO emissions.

In two-wheel-drive manual form, the 1.6 dCi has CO emissions of 115g/km and an EU combined fuel consumption figure of 64.2mpg. The Xtronic automatic version emits 119g/km and returns 61.4mpg, while the four-wheel-drive manual version has figures of 129g/km and 57.6mpg. Redesigned from the ground up, the new Qashqai has been created to meet the demands and expectations of next-generation crossover buyers.



There are sector-first innovations and fresh thinking in key areas of the new Qashqai

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Motoring

Shot in arm for electric vehicles from BMW i3

THE i3 is a big deal, not just for BMW but also for the electric car industry.

Boasting an innovative approach to design, construction and its underlying technology, this could be the car to give the electric car market the shot in the arm it needs to make the move from niche to mainstream status.

To date, early adopters have helped drive interest in electric transport. BMW is clearly keen to tap into this buyer demographic; witness the i3's futuristic looks and the car-maker's efforts at community building with a comprehensive smartphone app that can remotely monitor your pride and joy.

The bottom line is a carbon composite shell wrapped in funky-looking panels and room for four inside the radically styled, by current standards, cabin. Wood trim blends well with the car's exposed composite shell and the liberal use of natural fibres for door panels and the top of the fascia.

Thankfully

Still, this window dressing would all be for naught if the i3 failed to deliver the goods in the real world. Thankfully it's not, as the electric BMW offers possibly the most rounded driving and ownership experience to date. Granted, progress is rapid in the electric car sector, but the i3 behaves more, well, car-like than most.

Interestingly, BMW has retained its trademark rear-wheel drive layout for the i3. At a whisker under four metres, it's a genuine compact car, and this is reflected in its agility around town and its Black Cab-rivalling turning circle. The i3's narrow section tyres also play a part, plus they contribute towards the car's slippery aerodynamic properties. With BMW's clean-sheet approach to design comes the ability to place the batteries, a 230kg slab of lithium-ion power,



BMW's i3 has an innovative approach to design, construction and technology

under the car's flat floor. This ensures maximum occupant space in the cabin, a decent size boot and a positive effect on the car's handling. The 170-horsepower electric motor also plays a significant part in the i3's overall performance.

And you can't talk about batteries without covering the practicalities of range. BMW previously conducted detailed research with volunteers and fleets of electric 1 Series and Mini models to observe driver behaviour.

As you'd expect, although the mainly urban journeys were frequent, they were short. With that in mind, a real world range of around 100 miles isn't so bad.

Although different eco-centric driving modes can be selected to maximise driving range, the i3's in-built brake regeneration properties can return a meaningful amount of charge to the battery over the course of a journey. You need to lay off the brake pedal though, as simply easing off the throttle at urban speeds is enough to bring the i3

to a steady yet prompt halt. While that's happening, the i3's battery is getting a small but useful top up. Conversely, lean hard on the throttle and you can experience a 1 Series diesel level of brisk acceleration.

The ability to drive almost exclusively using just one pedal aside, the i3 delivers a surprisingly conventional driving experience.

Largely familiar controls, a lofty driving position, good visibility and a high level of refinement go a long way to justifying the car's premium price tag and ensuring its place within the BMW family.

Of course, the financial aspect of the car should be equally appealing. The absence of road tax and fuel liabilities rank high alongside the ability to charge the car for very little – overnight via a domestic electricity supply, and a matter of hours when connected to a high output wall box or public recharging point.

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Models Shown: Jazz 1.2 i-VTEC S Manual in Milano Red Non-Metallic, Civic 1.4 i-VTEC S Manual in Milano Red Non-Metallic and CR-V 2.0 i-VTEC S Manual 2WD in optional Passion Red Pearl. Terms and Conditions: Nil Advanced Payment offer on Jazz 1.2 i-VTEC S Manual and Civic 1.4 i-VTEC S Manual, £999 Advanced Payment offer on CR-V 2.0 i-VTEC S Manual 2WD. All offers are correct at the time of going to print however Honda (UK) reserves the right to change this offer at any time. Models subject to availability. Written details available on request. The facilities offered are for the hire of goods. The scheme is available to recipients of the Higher Rate Mobility Component of the Disability Living Allowance or War Pensioners Mobility Supplement. To qualify for this offer you must be in receipt of a minimum of 12 months allowance. Valid for applications between 1 January 2014 to 31 March 2014 to Motability Operations Limited (Registered Company No. 1373876), City Gate House, 22 Southwark Bridge Road, London SE1 9HB. Promoter is Honda Motor Europe Limited trading as Honda (UK) at 470 London Road, Slough, Berkshire SL3 8QY. (Registered Company No. 1373876), City Gate House, 22 Southwark Bridge Road, London SE1 9HB. Promoter is Honda Motor Europe Limited trading as Honda (UK) at 470 London Road, Slough, Berkshire SL3 8QY

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Selected weekend departures

Saturday Night from £139.⁹⁵

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Take in a top West End show and have some free time in London for shopping and sightseeing. For the Dine and Dance option see the matinee performance before heading back to the hotel for dinner and disco (conditions apply). For the Saturday Night option see the evening performance. For both breaks the price includes a theatre ticket, overnight stay in a four-star outer London hotel, with full English breakfast (plus dinner for Dine and Dance options). Pick ups offered are Dudley, Shrewsbury, Telford, Walsall and Wolverhampton.

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**The "from" price and price bands vary for each show – see brochure for details.
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Organised by Omega Events Ltd (ABTA Y590X)



For a theatre brochure please call the promotions team on (01902) 319999 (Monday to Friday, 9am-5pm), or go to expressandstar.com/starextratravel

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Index

- 1 Family
- 2 Leisure Time
- 3 Home & Services
- 4 Pets & Animals
- 5 Business & Farming
- 6 Property
- 7 Jobs
- 8 Motoring
- 9 Local Information
- 10 Personals

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Telephone line opening times over the festive period.

Monday, December 23	8.30am - 6pm
Christmas Eve, Tuesday 24	8.30am - 2pm
Christmas Day, Wednesday 25	Closed
Boxing Day, Thursday 26	Closed
Friday, December 27	8.30am - 6pm
Saturday, December 28	Closed
Monday, December 30	8.30am - 6pm
New Years Eve, Tuesday 31	8.30am - 2pm
New Years Day, Wednesday 1	Closed
Thursday, January 2	8.30am - 6pm
Friday, January 3	8.30am - 6pm
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Please note that our deadlines will be subject to change considerably over the Christmas period. Please call 01902 317 878 for any further information.

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LOST—Wallet, Kitchen Lane area of Wednesfield, with photos inside, reward given for safe return of the photos. Please phone 07972 482340.

MISSING SINCE

NOVEMBER 2
Small, dark, tabby cat, black stripes, 10 years old, microchipped, from Renton Road, Oxley, Wolverhampton, near allotments. Could be wandering on Rake Gate Estate.
If you have any information about her please ring Pat on 01902 567603.

religious notices

christadelphian

OPEN THE BIBLE AND DISCOVER ITS MESSAGE! God's word and how it came to us, January 5, at 6pm, The Community Centre, High Street, Kingswinford. Or write to The Christadelphians, FREEPOST WV1681 Kingswinford DY6 9BR for free information pack or ring 01384 886544 for recorded message.

1 Family

consoles, games & accessories

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3 Home & Services

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4 Pets & Animals

vets

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2. Do not arrange to collect a puppy from any other location than that of the breeder.
3. Ensure that you are given any KC documentation, if pedigree. Whilst Midland News Association publications take great care to avoid publication of advertisements from Puppy Farmers we cannot accept any liability should readers purchase from this kind of establishment.

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01299 269181 or 07564 262371 www.forest-dog-rescue.org.uk

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guns & dogs

NOTICE TO ADVERTISERS
Advertisers must ensure that they meet all necessary legal requirements for owning and using guns.

5 Business & Farming

accountants

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6 Property

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properties wanted

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overseas property

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7 Jobs

office & secretarial

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01902 744726 / 07831 646601

8 Motoring

cars over £1500

FORD FOCUS 1.6 Titanium, 3-dr, 55 reg, 62K, tax and MoT May 2014, leather, alloys, CD, Cat D £2,100 ono. 07730 496811.

FORD KA 1.3 Style, 08 reg, MoT April 14, 45,000 miles, lady owner from new. Good condition and runner. £1,950. 07812 357499.

MERCEDES C180 K2003, 3 door, Coupe, MoT June 2014, FSH, very good condition, £2,195 ono. 07951 376480. Wolverhampton.

MERCEDES CLK 220 CDI Auto, 06, 103,000 miles, FSH, Tax, MoT, leather seats, A/C, very good condition. £5,995. 07831 325174.

PEUGEOT 1007 SPORT 1.4, black, 2007, 21,850 miles, 12 months MoT, 5 months tax, full spec, £2,325 ono. 07932 479632.

PEUGEOT PARTNER Quicksilver, 2006, silver, 110k 2.0 HDI, MoT, tax, £2,500 ono. 07925 957600.

SEAT Ibiza 54 plate, 3 door, silver, MoT 2014, tax 2014, very good condition, £2,300. 07770 811033.

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that the Business Advertisements (Disclosure) Order of 1977 requires that advertisements must clearly differentiate between Private and Trade.

CITROEN SAXO DESIRE 1.4, 5dr, MoT August 2014, very good condition, £375. 07908 895829.

NISSAN ALMERA 2001, 1.6, petrol, 12 months tax and MoT, very good condition, £375. 07908 895829.

PEUGEOT 206 1.1 S, 2004, 49,000 miles, fsh, blue, 3dr, full MoT, 3 owners, excellent condition, £995. 07960 400391.

PEUGEOT 206 SW Estate, 2003, 1400cc, petrol, long MoT, tax, 71k miles, £795. 07950 398750.

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7 seater people carrier, 2002 model, 2.0 auto, fully loaded, pas, EW, AC, CD, DVD, fsh, chiller box, twin heaters, long MoT, long tax, mint condition, give away at only, £995.

01922 278508 or 07552 801216.

TOYOTA COROLLA GS VVT1.4, silver, 2000, 46K, tax, MoT, fsh by Toyota, in family from new, alloys, fsh e/m, c/i, colour coded bumpers and mirrors, mint condition. £1,200 ono. 07980 709514.

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Jess Varnish's sights are set on being world champion after overcoming injury



Varnish at the Manchester Velodrome. Pictures by Patrick Mulvaney



Varnish celebrating a gold medal with Victoria Pendleton in the team sprint

Bikes, pain and 200 camels

AS an athlete Jess Varnish may be worth her weight in gold but in Marrakesh it seems her price is considerably lower.

"I almost got sold, some guy wanted to buy me for 200 camels," she says. "I think it was because I've got blonde hair. He was going to my mum: 'Is this your daughter?' and mum was like 'yeah' and he replied: 'She should come and live with me for 200 camels.' I was like 'get me out of here now'."

Varnish laughs as she recalls the trip with mum Helen in February, designed to take her mind off the back injury which kept her out for almost six months.

It capped almost 18 months of pain for the Halesowen cyclist following her Olympic disqualification from the team sprint final with Victoria Pendleton in 2012.

The back problem literally added injury to the insult, but silver in the team sprint at the Mexico World Cup with Becky James recently proved her quality.

It added to her team sprint, match sprint, 500m time trial and keirin titles at the National Championships in November – and two bronze medals at the European Championships a month earlier. It allows Varnish to be remarkably philosophical when we meet as the 23-year-old swings her feet over the seat in front of her at the Velodrome in Manchester.

Winning

"The Olympics didn't change me, it doesn't define me being an Olympic champion or winning a medal," says Varnish.

"The injuries probably define me more than the Olympics, because you have to do it on your own. 'Nobody' – apart from the people who are really close to you – understands. You have to get on with it yourself."

"I wasn't naive, but I thought nothing bad was ever going to happen. I never thought I'd be restricted with what I could do. It's probably good it's happened, in a way."

"If I got disqualified in the World final I would be gutted, but nothing would ever be as bad as the Olympics. I would be really sad, but I'd get on with it."

"The Olympics is something you've been training for all your life, for this one thing, and then very quickly it's gone. It doesn't even mean anything. The injury has put things into perspective. A few months ago I would have been happy going to Mexico just to do anything."

We touch further on the Olympics, but there is little else Varnish can say. She was the only competing member of the British cycling track team not to win a medal in London last summer.

She and Pendleton were disqualified in the team sprint when they were guaranteed silver and would probably have won gold. The nation saw her distraught as Pendleton held her in the Velodrome, the chance of a medal gone, and she has moved on.

There is a World Championship to think about in Febru-

ary in Cali, Colombia, but it's a goal Varnish doubted she would make after such a turbulent year.

A backache on a training camp in Australia in January developed into a more serious problem and left her fearing missing another season. The mundane chores of cleaning and shopping – let alone continuing her career – were put on hold.

And the seriousness of the problem was revealed with a simple sneeze.

"Don't even talk to me about that," she says, still wincing with the memory. "It had been coming on for months. When I was in Australia, I could feel it every day and I just wanted to get home."

"I had an injection and it was an epidural so it had to go into the discs. The needle is long and you go in and out of a scanner when it's in your back. They said: 'That should do it,' but in my mind it was still there. It felt OK, but when you're hurt your body just knows."

"Then one day I was doing a lift in the gym and it just went. I started crying, and I never thought I'd cry in the gym. I thought I'd broken it, I couldn't walk, couldn't bend down or anything."

"And when I got home I sneezed – oh my God! I dropped to the floor in pain – my legs just went."

"Liam (Phillips – Varnish's boyfriend and UCI BMX World Champion) wasn't in the room but I was like 'Liam, what the hell just happened?' My body was out of control; it was bizarre and really scary. Now I've got to sneeze with my mouth open – and just get my germs everywhere. I have to, just because of paranoia."

Varnish had torn the L5/S1 disc in her lower back with fluid leaking out of the disc and surgery or enforced rest were the only options.

She chose rest and only managed to return to concerted training in July, nearly six months after the initial problems.

It was the first injury of her career – give or take a day or two off – and in an honest and vulnerable moment left her questioning a return to the top.

"I wasn't thinking about retiring, but I didn't think I'd be able to come back as before," she says. "Every time I was on the bike it was hurting and I didn't want to do it for the rest of my life with pain. There would be no enjoyment."

"I'd go on my rollers in the morning or on a gym bike

but I couldn't bend over. I'd just be in pain and how was I meant to put power down in this position?"

"The idea of doing a start made me want to cry. Your back is central so everywhere felt awful, I had pain in my legs, everywhere."

"I'd worked so hard to put on muscle and get stronger and more powerful but I came back and everyone was saying I'd wasted away."

"I couldn't do anything to keep the muscle there, I lost 7kg just of muscle."

"It's bizarre because people would think you'd get fat, but I just lost it. I felt awful and weak and thinking: 'How I am ever going to get back to do this? After the time off I'd come back to the track and train and it would hurt, so they'd just send me home. It was one step forward and two steps back all the time.'"

Varnish blames the lack of down time after the Games for her injury, believing her body could not cope after the demands of preparing for London 2012.

She had just two weeks off in an attempt to ride herself out of the disappointment but admits, in future, she will ask British Cycling chiefs for more rest.

"We never ever get a break. Looking back I'm really going to push to have that time because if I'd had more time off after the Olympics, I don't think I'd have been injured," she says.

"I came back too early, 100 per cent. I had a couple of weeks off, but I wanted to do it for myself because of what happened at the Games. I wanted to get back into it myself to prove I was still in good shape."

"Your body can't do it at the end of the day – so I ended up having to have five months off. Vicky put a lot of things in perspective and then Chris Hoy got in touch to say that, although things might seem horrible, I was doing the right thing and I would get back into the sport. 'To be encouraged by two people who had been through it all was wonderful.'"

Varnish cracks another smile, joking about her own misfortune. But when it comes to her return, she is focused.

China's Lee Wai Sze has built on her bronze in the keirin at London 2012 and team sprint world and Olympic champions, Germany's Kristina Vogel and Miriam Welte – who beat Varnish and James in Mexico – are chief threats. And even though she and James were under China's old world record time set at London 2012, they were still second in Aguascalientes recently.

So does Varnish, who immediately lost the team sprint world record she set with Pendleton at London 2012 to China in the very next race, need to get faster?

"Yep," she says matter-of-factly. "Everyone has got faster, which is great because it shows the sport is going in the right direction."

Her training has changed, incorporating more pilates, as the Worlds and the Commonwealth Games in Glasgow this summer loom. "I don't think it's going to be gone ever," says Varnish, who began track cycling at an early age and was selected to join British Cycling's Olympic Development Programme in 2005, making selection a year ahead of her age group.

"It's always going to be something I'll have to manage – and want to manage. It could come back at any time and I want to keep my body healthy for as long as possible. I'm 23 and hopefully have a long career ahead of me."

"It was such a bad injury; I don't want anything like that again. I'll always be aware of it and I'll always do rehab and pilates."

Frustration

"That's what I've started to do because of my back. I've had to change in the gym. I can't do some lifts which I used to do because of the load on the disc."

There's no frustration now though, even after watching sprint partner James take gold in the keirin and sprint at the World Track Championships in Minsk in February.

The pair, who grew up together in the British Cycling programme, were in Pendleton's shadow.

But there is no battle to become the sport's new golden girl. "We are really good friends, we've been doing the same training, have pushed ourselves and raced together at the World Cup," says Varnish, who also rides for Team V-Sprint Racing, which was founded by dad Jim, a former National and World Cycle Speedway champion.

"I didn't get the icing on the cake at the Worlds because I was in good shape apart from my back, but Becky got all the rewards from it."

"It wasn't my time. Becky has had her injuries, I was happy it all came together."

Varnish dreams about being world champion and emulating James – the closest she has come was team sprint silver in 2011 – something she thought she would have to put on hold for another year.

But after overcoming her demons, on and off the track, it is a realistic aim in February.

The scars have healed and Varnish is happy to the point where she apologises for talking about things too much. It has been a long road, but something which has left her fearless.



Cycling champion Jess Varnish

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SPORT

Long road ahead

Cycling ace Jess sets sights on world championships

Page 35



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Boost for Cradley as Perry in return

TOM PERRY handed Cradley Heathens a perfect Christmas gift by securing a return for this year.

Paul Starke, a hero of last season's grand slam team, has also agreed a new deal to spearhead the side.

Max Clegg, the talented 16-year-old Yorkshire racer, is already on board along with Steve Worrall, who was chased by a host of other clubs.

"When I got the call I was happy, to be coming back home," said Perry.

"It's a great club for so many reasons and it's nice to be riding on my doorstep again."

Without Perry in their side, the Heathens romped to a clean sweep of National League honours in 2013. But now he is back, Perry has his eyes set on repeating those achievements to earn his own National League winners' medal.

He added: "It was a great season for Cradley last year whereas things didn't go right for me at all."

"Hopefully, this time things can be different for me and I can have a good year and the club can carry on winning trophies with me involved."

Starke said. "I'm so pleased to be back. If I couldn't ride for Cradley then I wouldn't have ridden for any other National League club."

Archer hits target twice

Tipton 2 Causeway Utd 2

TWO Jordan Archer goals came within a late equaliser of Tipton taking all three points against Black Country rivals Causeway.

Jack Pearlman's excellently taken late equaliser gave Causeway a share of the spoils a string of wasted Tipton chances in the first half should really have put the game beyond doubt.

After a goalless first half, Tipton broke the deadlock just two minutes after the interval as Archer bundled home at the far post.

On 68 minutes a brilliant finish by Jovan Blake-Walker brought United level. Archer restored the lead on 76 minutes but with four minutes on the clock, a slick finish by Pearlman, brought United level again.

Tipton followed this with a 2-0 win at Tividale on Boxing Day thanks to a Luke Paskin own goal and one from Marvin Nisbett.

Welborn snatches title from Carruthers



Jason Welborn shows off his Midlands title belt. Picture: Rob Ellis-UKO boxing

ROWLEY Regis fighter Jason Welborn produced a great leveller after coming from behind to rip a second Midlands title at two weights from Birmingham's Terry Carruthers.

Welborn, a former area champion at welterweight, replaced his former crown with Carruthers' belt at light middle after blood was shed at the Holiday Inn in Birmingham.

The champion had set a fast pace but was sliced open above both eyes by the eighth round, forcing referee John Keane's

Boxing

intervention 52 seconds into the session.

The fight doubled up as a British title eliminator and Welborn said: "As the rounds went on, I could tell I was hitting and hurting him."

"When I saw the blood, I just kept working on him."

"I stepped it up and I feel it would have really told after another round or two. When he was cut, it was only a matter of time. It's a British eliminator."

That's what I was in there for, not just the Midlands - 2014 will be my year, I am on top of the world now."

On the undercard, Halesowen's Lennox Clarke shut-out Jody Meikle on points.

The two light heavyweights clashed in the evening's opening bout and, by the final bell, the raw but brutal Clarke met an immovable object in the Scunthorpe slugger.

Clarke, who has bypassed the amateur ranks completely, had wiped out everything in his path

on the white-collar circuit, but stayed cool and went with Meikle to record a 40-36 verdict.

Birmingham's Craig Cunningham was 2-1 on knock-downs before rolling over a 39-37 points winner in a four-round middleweight bout against Stoke's Marcus Le Doux.

Fellow Brummie Michael Rooney scored a fourth straight pro win at light welterweight in a four-round points landslide over Kristian Laight, his rival's 180th paid contest.

Christie ensures chances not mist

Eastwood Town 0 Halesowen Town 2

HALESOWEN have now won seven league games in a row and are two points clear at the top of Evo-Stik Division One South after making short work of basement boys Eastwood Town.

A game played in swirling fog saw a bizarre incident in the second half when the home side had to change their black-and-white striped kit because the assistant referee could not make them out in the mist.

By that time the Yeltz were two goals ahead courtesy of an early brace from in-form veteran Iyseden Christie, who has now scored four goals in two games.

The second half was dominated by the conditions, both teams finding it hard to make headway in the foggy conditions.

But a triple substitution in the last 15 minutes almost saw Halesowen increase their lead when first Nigel Penney, then Matthew Martin saw efforts stopped by goalkeeper Daniel Dobie.

Yeltz go top at Christmas

Halesowen 3 Sheffield FC 0

HALESOWEN delivered the perfect present with a 10th consecutive home league win sending them top of the Evo-Stik Division One South table for Christmas.

Tom Tonks' long throws proved instrumental to each goal, setting up Iyseden Christie after five minutes, Kyle Patterson on 37 and Christie again after 71.

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HEFTY CROWD SEES GLASSBOYS GO NAP

Stourbridge 5 Redditch 1

THE Glassboys completed a league double over their nearest neighbours in the Southern Premier in-front of a bumper Boxing Day crowd of 637.

Although Gary Hackett's men ran out strong winners in the end, they were made to work hard for their 2-1 interval lead after Redditch began in positive fashion.

In the 10th minute Omari Sterling James crossed from the right to Ashley Sammons, but his shot was well blocked by Ben Billingham. Three minutes later a neat interchange of passes saw Jermaine Hylton feed Sammons and his back-heel enabled Sterling-James the chance to get away a shot that curled over the bar.

Partner

Stourbridge replied in the 16th minute with Sean Geddes on the left pulled the ball back to Luke Benbow, but his first-time low drive was off-target. A minute later though Stourbridge opened the scoring with a well-crafted move.

Kyle Haynes drove forward from right-back before slipping the ball into the feet of Benbow. He laid the ball off to Ryan Rowe and continued his run into the right-hand side of the area where he received a return pass from his strike partner and was able to tuck away a low shot past Bradley Catlow.

Redditch responded to deservedly get back on level terms with 27 minutes gone. Dean Coleman could only parry a 20-yard drive from Sam Youngs and Sterling-James was on hand to net the rebound. Four minutes

Stourbridge Town

before the interval, a howler from Catlow allowed Stourbridge to re-gain the lead. A right-wing corner from Geddes looked to have provided the visiting custodian with a regulation catch. However the ball slipped through his hands and Nathan Bennett was left with an easy close range header.

Redditch threatened on 65 minutes as Ed Ahenkorah let fly with a shot that Coleman saved at his near post.

The home side gave themselves some breathing space on 79 minutes with a tidy finish by sub Drew Canavan from outside the box into the bottom corner and a minute later the Reds defence was carved open again as Geddes burst from midfield and through the right-hand channel before picking out an unmarked Jordan Fitzpatrick with a measured pass and Fitzpatrick dinked the ball beyond Catlow and into the net. Stourbridge made it 5-1 as Billingham's right-wing flag-kick was met by Will Richards at the near post and as the ball drifted towards the back-stick, Rowe was on-hand to nod home from inside the six-yard box.

DK still searching for that elusive first win



Ed Parry leads the charge for Stourbridge as they take on neighbours Dudley Kingswinford

Stourbridge 55 DKs 0

THE results and aspirations of these two local rivals could not be more differently defined as the second half of the season, and the reverse fixtures, get under way.

Early season favourites to win the league, Stourbridge currently lie third in the league, while DK are yet to register a league victory and lie bottom of the league.

DK's inexperienced team faced their high flying neighbours and although DK kicked off with a strong wind at their backs it was Stour-

bridge who took first blood with veteran winger Nathan Bressington scoring an unconverted try in the corner.

Undeterred DK stuck at it and upped their game and the following a fine penalty kick to the corner pinned the home team on their own line.

Possession, however, was lost at the line out and old boy Stefan Shillingford took advantage with an unconverted try.

A third try came when fly half Gary Dipple scored under the posts.

On the half hour the fourth bonus

point try by full back Jarvis followed another lost line out and within a minute DK loose forward Sam Pedley was yellow carded.

The bigger stronger quicker Stourbridge side ran in three more tries within a few minutes, one from Dacres and two more from Bressington, for a 41-0 half-time advantage.

Dacres scored his second try in the corner after 44 minutes, converted by Hearn. DK's dogged defence stood firm, though and only one more converted try was conceded for the rest of the half.

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